

THE
REIGN OF GRACE,
FROM ITS
RISE
TO ITS
CONSUMMATION.

BY ABRAHAM BOOTH.

We believe, that through the Grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, we shall be saved.

Acts xv. ii.

THE SECOND EDITION,
CORRECTED AND GREATLY ENLARGED.

L O N D O N :

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M.DCC.LXXI.

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ADVERTISEMENT,

To the FIRST EDITION.

THIS work was first recommended to me, by one of its Author's constant hearers. But finding, upon enquiry, that the Author had learnt at school only to read—that, at the usual age, he was put apprentice by his father, to a Stocking-weaver—that very soon after he had served out his time, he married—and, in order to maintain a family every year increasing, was obliged to labour hard at his loom, I concluded the performance could scarce deserve a publication. Hearing, however, a pleasing account both of Mr. *Booth's* life and of his ministry, which he exercises amongst a small congregation at *Sutton in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire*, at the same time working for his bread (a custom not unfrequent

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amongst the *Baptists*) I desired to peruse the manuscript.

To my great surprise, there appeared to me in it, the marks of a genius, joined with the feelings of a christian heart; a vigour of style much above what is common in our best religious writers; in his reasoning clearness and force, and in his doctrine an apostolic purity. Some persons of learning and judgment, who perused the work, were of the same opinion. From thence I esteemed it both a pleasure and a duty, on my part, to do the little I was able in recommending to the acquaintance of all my friends, who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, a worthy minister and a good writer, in defence of his glory.—I flatter myself also, that this work will prove both so pleasing and so useful, to men of an evangelical taste, that some better situation may be found for Mr. *Booth*, amongst the christians of his own persuasion, to whose distinguishing tenet, he, from a principle of conscience, adheres. A situation proper for a man, whom God has endowed

ADVERTISEMENT. ♦

dowed with abilities, and a taste for good learning; so that he shall be no more subject to the necessity of manual labour. I wish this for the sake of many. For if, before the thirtieth year of the Author's age, under the care of providing for a large family by his own labour, with the benefit of no more study than some hours taken from the season appointed for rest; such a treatise as *The Reign of Grace* was wrote, may we not with good reason expect considerable improvement? May we not very reasonably conclude, that after some years, if it please God, solely devoted to the proper work of the ministry, we might be much more instructed and charmed by the productions of Mr. *Booth's* pen?

Some passages in *The Reign of Grace*, I am very well aware, must prove extremely offensive to those who entertain very defective and low thoughts of the personal obedience of Christ and his sacrifice; and, taking these passages by themselves, they may be put in such a light, as to reflect a charge of

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of licentious doctrine on the Author. But let their place and connection be well considered, and the detestable accusation will be found utterly without ground. And if any are still disposed to put such a construction upon the work, I would answer them, in the behalf of my friend, from the witty Dr. DONNE. "Sentences, in authors, are "like hairs in the horse's tail: when plucked "one from another, they serve to make "springes to catch birds; when taken toge- "ther, they serve both for use and orna- "ment."

23 OC 62

H. VENN.

HUDDERSFIELD,

April 4th, 1768.

P R E F A C E.

Never did common sense, vigilance, and prudence
more effectually combine to secure the author.

P R E F A C E.

I SHALL not offer any apology to the public, on behalf of the ensuing Treatise. For if the leading sentiments, espoused and defended in it, correspond with the unerring oracles, I have no apprehensions from the frowns of men; if not, I should not be able, by the most laboured apology, to justify my conduct.

The doctrines of grace, free, rich, sovereign grace, are here maintained, and handled in a practical manner. It has been my endeavour, in the following pages, not only to state and defend the capital truths of the gospel, in a doctrinal way; but also, to point out their peculiar importance, as happily adapted to awaken the conscience, and comfort the heart; to elevate

elevate the affections, and influence the whole conduct in the ways of holiness.

In this Edition of The Reign of Grace, I have made large additions. The principal of which, is, an entire chapter on Election; which renders the scheme of doctrines more complete, and the contents of the book more answerable to the title.—I also thought it my duty, in a particular manner, to bear a public testimony to that important part of revealed truth; having, in my younger years, greatly opposed it, in a Poem, On Absolute Pre-destination. Which Poem, if considered in a critical light, is despicable; if in a theological view, detestable; as it is an impotent attack on the honour of divine grace, in respect to its glorious freeness; and a bold opposition to the sovereignty of God. So I now consider it, and as such I here renounce it.*

* Written in the year 1754, and printed in 1758, but never published.—See my *Death of Legal Hope, the Life of Evangelical Obedience*, p. 53, 54. Note.

However

However the doctrine of reigning grace may be decried, as licentious, it is that truth which God, in all ages, has delighted to honour; which the Divine Spirit has owned, for the information and comfort, for the holiness and happiness of sinful men. Were I not fully persuaded of this, rather than appear as an advocate for it, I would condemn my tongue to everlasting silence, and my pen to perpetual rest.

I have nothing further to add, by way of Preface, but my ardent prayers, that a divine blessing may attend every perusal of the following chapters; so as to make the performance really useful, and cause it to answer some valuable purposes for the great Redeemer's glory.

A. B O O T H.

Fieldgate, Whitechapel-Road,
LONDON, Oct. 3, 1771.

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... by giving it to myself when I
left home and I am now in Ireland
and of course and again I am good
in future and things which are done
will not be done here again but still
I am not able to do it and I am
not going to do it and I am not
going to do it and I am not going to do it.

E R R A T A.

Page 38, line 15, for *Spi it*, *read Spirit.*

— 195, — 1, *delete the two commas.*

— 280, margin, for *VNN's*, *read VENN's.*

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THE
REIGN OF GRACE, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

THE gospel of reigning grace, being a doctrine truly divine, has ever been the object of the world's contempt. It was of old a stumbling-block to the self-righteous *Jew*, and foolishness to the philosophic *Greek*. *Paul*, who was a resolute assertor of the honours of grace, and indefatigable in preaching Christ, found it so by repeated experience; and that, not only among the illiterate and profane, but also among the learned and devout. Yea, he had frequent occasion to observe, that the religious devotees of his age, were the first in opposing the doctrine he preached, and the most hardened enemies against the truth of

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God,

God. The polite, the learned, the religious, all agreed, to load both his character and doctrine with the foulest reproaches.—Nor was this treatment peculiar to *Paul*, but common to all his cotemporaries, who espoused the same glorious cause, and laboured in the same beneficent work. The doctrine they preached was charged with licentiousness. Their enemies boldly affirmed that their language was; *Let us do evil that good may come.* Thus were their character and labours impeached: *that*, as hateful to God; *these*, as destructive to man.

But what was the ground of this impious charge? Were they more loose in their morals, or more scandalous in their lives, than their neighbours? No such thing.—Had they not as much regard for practical religion and true morality, as any of their objectors? More, far more than they all.—Did they never exhort to good works, as necessary to answer any valuable purposes in the christian life? They often pressed the performance of them, as absolutely necessary to answer various important purposes, both in the sight of God and man.—What, then, could be the reason of so horrid a charge? The reason, the true reason was, their doctrine was not in the least adapted to gratify the

the pride of man. They taught, that without the atonement made on the cross, and the grace revealed in it, the state of the best of men would have been absolutely desperate; desperate as that of the devils, and those who are already damned. And as the apostles were free to declare, that the state of the most respectable part of mankind was evil; dreadfully evil; evil as to those things for the sake of which, they most highly esteemed themselves; so they boldly proclaimed a perfect Saviour and a finished salvation, to the most worthless and vile.

Further: Those primitive teachers and infallible guides, were not in the least acquainted with those *terms* and *conditions*, those pre-requisites and qualifications; the performing and attaining of which, are accounted so necessary by many in our own times, in order to acceptance with God. They knew but of one way, in which a sinner might be accepted of God and justified before him; and that was *entirely* of grace, through the perfect work of Christ alone.—The way of justification and salvation which they taught, is absolutely pure and unmixed. Grace, rich grace, does not only *appear* in it; but it *shines, reigns, triumphs*: it is the *only* thing. There is not the least tincture of those notions which foster

pride, or cherish self-esteem, discernible in it. All those fine distinctions, invented by the proud philosopher or self-righteous moralist, which tend in any degree, to support the opinion of human worthiness and darken our views of the most glorious grace; are, by them, entirely set aside and totally annihilated. The most shining deeds and valuable qualities which can be found among men; though highly useful and truly excellent, when set in their proper places, and referred to suitable ends; are, as to the grand article of justification, treated as non-entities. In this respect, the most zealous professor, with all his laboured performances, stands on a level with the most profane. The apostolic truth addressing all to whom it comes, as guilty, condemned, perishing wretches, leaves no room for preference or boasting in any; that so the whole glory of our salvation may be secured to that grace, which is infinitely rich and absolutely free.

At this, the devout pharisee and decent moralist are highly offended. Such doctrines being advanced, they think it incumbent upon them to stand up in defence of what they call, an *holy life*, and to support the sinking credit of good works, as having a considerable efficacy

ficacy in procuring our acceptance with God. This many persons frequently do, much more by *talking* about their necessity, than by *performing* them.—Now they think it their duty to rail at the preacher, as an avowed enemy to holiness; nor will they spare to give him the honourable title of, “a friend of publicans and sinners.” Now innumerable flanders and calumnies are raised and cast on the doctrine of grace, as being licentious; and on the ministers of it, as opening the flood-gates of iniquity. For they suppose that every thing bad may be justly expected, from men who openly disavow all dependance on their own duties; and whose hope of eternal happiness arises, not from the services which they perform, but from the grace which the gospel reveals—not from the worth which they possess, but from the work which Christ has wrought. Thus they despise the gospel under the fair pretence, of a more than common concern for the interests of holiness.

Nor is this the only offence which the gospel gives. For as it is entirely inconsistent with the natural notions of men, concerning acceptance with God, and contrary to every scheme of salvation which human reason suggests; and as it will admit of no co-partner

in relieving a distressed conscience, or in bringing deliverance to a guilty soul, but leaves every one who flights it and seeks for assistance from any other quarter, to perish under an everlasting curse; so the pride of the self-sufficient kindles into resentment against it, as a *most uncharitable* doctrine and *quite unsatisfiable*.—Nor can the faithful dispensers of this sacred truth, fail to share in the honour of these reproaches. For while they dare to affirm that this very gospel, so hateful to the sons of pride, exhibits the *only* way of a sinner's access to his offended Sovereign; and that all who oppose it and all who embrace its counterfeit, are left in the hands of divine justice without a mediator; they will be sure to be accounted persons of contracted minds, and very far from a liberal way of thinking—they will be deemed the dupes of bigotry, and little better than the enemies of mankind.

—He, indeed, who pretends to be a friend to revealed truth, but is cool and indifferent to its honour and interest; whose extensive charity is such, that he can allow them, who widely differ from him in the capital articles of the christian faith, to be safe in their own way; may enjoy his peculiar sentiments without much fear of disturbance. But though such

such a conduct may be applauded, under a false notion of *christian candour*, and a *catholic spirit*; though it may be the way to maintain a kind of friendly intercourse among multitudes, whose leading sentiments are widely different; yet it will be deemed, by the God of truth, as deserving no better a name, than a *joint opposition* to the spirit and design of his gospel. For such a timid and lukewarm profession of truth, is little better than a denial of it; than open hostilities against it. To seek for peace at the expence of truth, will be found in the end, no other than a wicked conspiracy against both God and man.—Notwithstanding, all such as love the truth, will boldly declare against all its counterfeits, and every deviation from it. And whatever may be the consequence, they will say with him of old; *Though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, let him be accursed.*

Thus the genuine gospel will always appear like an insult on the taste of the public. Where-ever it comes, if it be not received, it awakens disgust and provokes abhorrence. Nor can it be otherwise. For its principal

† Mr. NEWTON's *Review of Eccles. Hist.* p. 241, 242, 243.

design is, to mortify the pride of man, and display the glory of grace; to throw all human excellence down to the dust, and to elevate, even to thrones of glory, the needy and wretched; to shew that those things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight of God, and that he who is despised of men and abhorred by the nations, is Jehovah's eternal delight ‡.—The ancient gospel is an unceremonious thing. It pays no respect to the academic, because of his profound learning; nor to the moralist, on account of his upright conduct. It has not the least regard to the courtier, because of his pompous honours; nor to the devotee, for the sake of his zeal or his righteousness. No: The potent prince and the abject slave; the wise philosopher and the ignorant rustic; the virtuous lady and the infamous prostitute, stand on the same level in its comprehensive view.—Its business is only with the *worthless* and *miserable*, whoever they be. If these be relieved, its end is gained. If these be made happy, its Author is glorified, whatever may become of the rest. Towards these it constantly wears the most friendly aspect, and re-

‡ Isa. xlix. 7. Matt. iii. 17.

joices to do them good. But the self-sufficient, of every rank, are treated by it with the utmost reserve, and beheld with a steady contempt. *The hungry it filleth with good things, but the rich it sendeth empty away.*

These considerations may serve to shew us the true state of the case, as it stood between *Paul* and his opponents. The case was much the same between the protestants and papists, at, and for some time after, the Reformation. Nor will the apostolic doctrine ever fail to be attended with a strenuous opposition and foul reproaches, so long as ignorance of its real nature and legal pride, prevail in the hearts of men.—Many, indeed, are the methods which have been devised to render the unpalatable truth more generally acceptable; and, in some measure, to remove the offence of the cross out of the way. But the sad effects have been, the gospel has been corrupted and almost lost; the consciences of awakened sinners have been left to grope in the dark, for that consolation which nothing but the unadulterated truth could give; and instead of promoting holiness, the reverse has been awfully manifest. It behoves, therefore, every lover of sacred truth, to let it stand on its own basis, and not to tamper with it. To leave all its credit

credit and all its success in the world, to its own intrinsic worth; to that authority with which it is clothed, and to the management of that sovereign Being, who ordained it for his own glory.

But, however the doctrine of reigning grace may be despised by the self-sufficient, it will ever be revered and highly esteemed by the *poor in spirit*. For by it they are informed of an honourable way of escape from the wrath to come, which they know they have justly deserved. To the sensible sinner, therefore, it must always be a joyful sound.—And though such persons who are ignorant of its nature, tendency and design, are ever ready to imagine that it has an unfriendly aspect upon morality and good works, when preached in its glorious freeness; yet we may boldly affirm, that it is the *grand instrument* ordained by an holy God, for informing the ignorant, comforting the disconsolate, and rescuing the profligate from that worst of vassallage, the servitude of sin, and subjection to satan. Such is the benign tendency of the glorious gospel. Such is its friendly and sanctifying influence on the hearts of men.

It will, indeed, be readily acknowledged, that the *doctrine* may be held in licentiousness,

ness, by those who preach or profess it. But then it will be as confidently maintained, that whoever holds it in unrighteousness, never received the *love* of that sacred truth, or experienced it in its power. For, to have a bare *conviction* of the truth in the mind, and to experience its *power* on the heart, are very different things. The former may produce an outward profession; the latter will elevate the affections, turn the corrupt bias of the will, and influence the whole conduct.— With the steadiest persuasion, therefore, of the holy nature and tendency of the doctrine of divine grace, as it is in itself, and as it operates on the minds and manners of all those who know it in truth; I proceed to give, not a *full display* (that is infinitely too high for mortals) but some *brief hints* concerning that grace which reigns; and of the way in which it is manifested, so as to demonstrate its power, glory, and majesty, in the salvation of sinners. And this I shall do by endeavouring to illustrate that important and charming passage, recorded in *Rom. v. 21.*—*Even so might GRACE REIGN, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.*—And while the author, conscious of his own insufficiency, looks up to the Spirit of wisdom for divine illumination

lumination, that he may write with all the precision and sanctity of truth, in opening the noble subject of the ensuing treatise ; he would intreat the reader to peruse, with candour and impartiality, the contents of the following pages.

C H A P. I.

Of the Signification of the Term Grace.

THAT we may proceed with greater clearness and certainty in our following enquiries, it is necessary that we should consider what is implied in the term *Grace*. The primary and principal sense of the word, is *free favour*; *unmerited kindness*. In this sense it is used most frequently in the inspired volume. In this acceptation it is to be taken, in the words of the Holy Ghost under consideration. *Grace*, in the writings of *Paul*, stands in direct opposition to works and worthiness; all works and worthiness of every kind and every degree. This appears from the following passages. *Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned of grace but of debt. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace. For by grace are ye saved—not of works, lest any man should boast. Who bath saved us—not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace* †.

† Rom. iv. 4, 16. Ephes. ii. 8. 9: 2 Tim. i. 9.

And

And as the word *mercy*, when taken in its strict and primary signification, has respect to some creature, either actually in a *suffering* state, or obnoxious to it; so *grace*, in its proper and strict sense, always presupposes *unworthiness* in its object. Hence, whenever any thing valuable is communicated, the communication of it cannot be of *grace*, any further than the person on whom it is conferred, is considered as *unworthy* by him who confers it. For so far as any degree of worth appears, the province of grace ceases, and that of justice and equity takes place. So that grace and worthiness cannot be connected in the same act and for the same end. The one must necessarily give place to the other, according to that very remarkable text; *If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work* *.— From the apostle's reasoning it is evident, that whatever is of *works*, is not of grace at all; and, that whatever is of *grace*, is not of works in any degree. In *Paul's* view of things, works and grace are essentially opposite, and as absolutely irreconcilable, as light and darkness, or heaven and hell.

* Rom. xi. 6.

The grace, therefore, about which we treat, may be thus defined; *It is the everlasting and absolutely free favour of God, manifested in the vouchsafement of spiritual and eternal blessings to the unworthy.* What those blessings are, we shall endeavour to shew in the subsequent pages. Meanwhile be it observed, tha according to the definition, the grace of God is *eternal*. Agreeable to the import of those reviving words; *Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love**. It is also *infinitely rich* and *divinely free*; entirely detached from all supposition of human worth, and absolutely independant on any such thing as human goodness. This is the eternal origin and glorious basis of our salvation. From hence it proceeds and is carried on to perfection. Grace shines through the whole. For, as an elegant writer observes, it is “not like “a fringe of gold, bordering the garment; “not like an embroidery of gold, decorating “the robe; but like the mercy-seat of the “ancient tabernacle, which was *gold—pure* “*gold—all gold throughout* †.”

Yes, reader, this is the inexhaustible source of all those inestimable blessings which the

* Jer. xxxi. 3. † HERV. *Dial.* vol. 1. p. 325. Ed. 5th.

Lord bestows on his unworthy creatures, in this or a future world. It is that which, in all that he does, or ever will do for sinners, he intends to render everlasting glory in their eyes, and in the eyes of all holy intelligences. The indelible motto, which is inscribed by the hand of Jehovah on all the blessings of the unchangeable covenant, is; **TO THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE ***.

Hence we may learn, That if grace in its own nature, and as it is exercised in our salvation, be directly opposite to all *works* and *worthiness*; then such persons are awfully deceived, who seek to join them together in the same work and for the same end. However high their pretences may be to holiness of heart or life; it is plain from the word of God, and may in some degree appear from the nature of the thing, that they take an effectual way to ruin their souls for ever; except that very grace prevent, of which they have such false and corrupt ideas.—For grace, the grace of a God, despairs to be helped out in the performance of that work, which peculiarly belongs to itself, by the poor, imperfect performances

* Eph. i. 6.

of men. Attempts to complete what grace begins, betray our pride and offend the Lord, but can never promote our spiritual interest. Let the reader, therefore, carefully remember, that grace is either *free* or it is not at all. And, that he who professes to look for salvation by grace, either believes in his heart to be saved ~~entirely~~ ^{entirely} by it, or he acts inconsistently in affairs of the greatest importance.

an borbánk, aki ismét a wóN megismerte
volt bár jóval kevésbé hihetően el, mint
a fiai, mert volt több. Címe, gyakorlati felségid
volt bár több függetlenségi hatalommal
nem volt semmi hatalommal. Úgy tűnt, mint a
bár nincs hatalommal, mint aki nem volt bár.
Aki nem volt bár, nem volt semmi hatalommal.
Aki nem volt bár, nem volt semmi hatalommal.

B

CHAP.

setting aside opinions of signs & tokens to
the last but one. (See note)

C H A P. II.

Of Grace, as it reigns, in our Salvation in general.

HAVING considered the import of the word *grace*, I now proceed to shew, What it is for grace to reign, in our salvation in general.—Grace here, is compared to a *Sovereign*. Now a sovereign, considered as such, is invested with regal power, and the highest authority. Grace, therefore, in her beneficent government, must exert and manifest power, *sovereign* power; must supersede the reign, and counteract the mighty and destructive operations of sin; or she can never bring the sinner to eternal life. For the Holy Spirit compares *sin* to a sovereign, whose reign terminates in death *.

And as *sin* appears, clothed in horrid deformity, armed with destructive power, menacing vengeance and threatening the offending, trembling wretch with eternal flames; so *grace* appears in her reign, arrayed in the beauties of holiness, smiling with divine benevolence, touched with feelings of the tenderest compassion, and armed with all the

* Rom. v. 21.

magnificence

magnificence of invincible power. Determined, fully determined, to exert her authority and gratify her compassion, under the conduct of infinite wisdom; to the everlasting honour of inflexible justice, inviolable veracity, and every divine perfection—by rescuing the obnoxious offender from the very jaws of destruction; by speaking peace to the alarmed consciences of the most damnable delinquents; by restoring to apostate creatures and vile miscreants, a real love of God and delight in the ways of holiness; and, finally, by bringing them safe to everlasting honour and joy. In a word, the heart of this mighty sovereign is compassion itself; her looks are love; her whole language balm to the bleeding soul, and her arm salvation. Such a sovereign is **GRACE**. They who are delivered by her, must enjoy a complete salvation. They who live under her most benign government must be happy indeed.

Divine grace, as reigning in our salvation, not only appears, but appears with *majesty*; not only shines, but *triumphs*. Providing all things; bestowing, *freely* bestowing all things, necessary to our eternal happiness. Grace does not set our salvation on foot, by accommodating its terms and conditions to the

enfeebled capacities of a lapsed creature; but begins, carries on, and completes the arduous work. Grace, as a sovereign, does not rescue the sinner from deserved destruction; furnish him with new abilities, and then leave him, by their proper use, to resist the tempter; to mortify his lusts; to attain those holy qualities and perform that righteousness, which constitute his meetness for, and give him a right to the eternal kingdom. If the province and work of grace were here to cease, things of the least importance to the glory of God and the felicity of man, would be left in the most uncertain and perilous situation. And, admitting the possibility of any sinner being saved in such a way, there would be ample scope for the exertions of spiritual pride, and much room for boasting; which would be diametrically contrary to the honour of the Most High, and frustrate the noble designs of grace.—No: This matchless favour, not only lays the foundation, but rears the superstructure also: not only settles the preliminaries, but executes the very business itself. The pharisee in the parable, made his acknowledgments to preventing and assisting grace. For, “ God I thank thee,” was his language. Yet it is evident, that his

views

views of grace were very contracted and superficial; and his hopes arising from it, very deceitful. Would we, then, view grace as *reigning*? We must consider it as the *alpha* and *omega*, the beginning and the end of our salvation; that the unrivalled honour of that greatest of all works, may be given to the *God of all grace*.

Having taken this *general* view of reigning grace, I would now ask; What think you, reader, of this wonderful favour? Is it worthy of God? Is it suitable to your own case?—Or, know you not, that you are by nature under the power and dominion of sin? Of *sin*, that dreadful sovereign; of *sin*, that worst of tyrants. *Sin reigns*, says the apostle; and the end of its reign, where the sovereignty of grace does not interpose, is eternal *death**. Can you sleep away your time and dream of doing well at the last, while under the power of so malignant a sovereign? Shall the toys and trifles of a transitory world amuse, when your *soul*, your immortal *ALL*, is at stake? If so, how lamentable your condition! how dreadful your state! Awake!—arise!—Bow the knee to divine grace, O stubborn rebel!

* Rom. v. 21. and vi. 23.

while she holds out the golden sceptre of pardon and peace. Acknowledge her supremacy, submit to her government, before justice ascend the throne and vengeance launch her bolts. For then an insurmountable and eternal bar, will lie against every application for mercy, though arising from the most pressing want*.

Or, if awake in your conscience, do you think it possible to effect your own deliverance? Alas! you are entirely without strength to perform any such thing; and grace was never intended as an *auxiliary*, to help the weak, but well-disposed, to save themselves. The mercy of God and the gospel of Christ, were never designed to assist and reward the righteous; but to relieve the miserable and save the desperate: to deliver such who have no other assistance, nor any other hope.— May the Lord enable you to see your abject vassallage! May the Spirit of truth convince you, that there is no possible way of escape, but by reigning grace! Then you will long for relief, then you will adore your Benefactor.

If on the other hand, you are burdened with sin and harassed by fears, the most clamor-

* Matt. vii. 22.

rous fears of being cast into hell; if sensible of your natural corruption, the multiplied iniquities of your life, the many shameful defects attending your best services, and your present absolute unworthiness, you are ready to sink in despondency; O remember! that grace has erected her throne. This forbids despair. For her wonderful throne is erected; not on the *ruins* of justice, not on the *dishonour* of the law; but, on the *BLOOD OF THE LAMB*. The inconceivably perfect *obedience*, and the infinitely meritorious *death* of the Son of God, form its mighty basis. Here grace is highly exalted: here grace sits in state, dispensing her favours and shewing her glory. To such a benevolent and condescending sovereign, the basest may have free access. By such a powerful sovereign, the most various, multiplied, and pressing wants may be relieved with the utmost ease and the greatest alacrity.—Remember, disconsolate soul, that the *name*, the *nature*, the *office* of **GRACE ENTHRONED**, loudly attest; that the greatest unworthiness and the most profligate crimes, are no bar to the sinner in coming to Christ for salvation; in looking to sovereign favour for all that he wants. Nay, they demonstrate, that the un-

worthy and sinful, are the *only* persons with whom grace is at all concerned. This is amazing! this is delightful!

Ho! all ye children of want, and sons of wretchedness! hither ye may come with the utmost freedom. Be it known to you; be it never forgotten by you; that Jehovah considered your indigent case, and designed your complete relief, when he erected this wonderful throne. Your names stand *first* in the heavenly grant. Nay, you are the *only* persons who are privileged with a right of access to this throne. Did sinners more generally know their state, and the glorious nature of grace as *feasted in majesty*; how would the throne of this mighty sovereign be crowded! crowded, not with persons adorned with fine accomplishments—but, with the poor, the maimed, the *halt* and the *blind**. With longing hearts, and up-lifted hands, big with expectation and sure of success, they would throng her courts. Thither they would flee, as a *cloud* for number, and as *doves* for speed; for there is provision made to supply all their wants. And as persons of all ranks and every character, are equally destitute of any righte-

ous title to the enjoyment of this good thing. *Luke xiv. 21.* *Isa. lx. 8.*

ous and valid plea for admission into the eternal kingdom; so, seeing their need, they have equally free access to this munificent sovereign, and the same ground to expect complete relief from all their distresses. Here, and in this respect, there is no difference between the devout professor, and the abandoned profligate; the chaste virgin, and the infamous prostitute. For, being all criminals, under the same condemnation and confined in the same dungeon; they have not the smallest gleam of hope, except what shines upon them in that compassionate proclamation, which is issued from the throne of grace, by the eternal Sovereign. But, as that proclamation is expressive of freest favour and richest grace; including offenders of the worst characters, and publishing pardon for sins of the deepest dye, and all ratified by veracity itself; it affords sufficient encouragement to the vilest wretch that lives, who is willing to owe his all to divine bounty—the strongest encouragement, without hesitation to receive the heavenly blessing, and with gratitude to rejoice in the royal donation.

“ —Yes, thine it is, O sovereign grace! to raise
“ the poor from the dunghill, and the needy

† Isa. iv. 1, 2, 3. Matt. xi. 28. John vi. 37. and vii.
37. Rev. xxii. 17.

"out of the dust. Thine it is, to set them
"on thrones of glory, and number them
"among the princes of heaven." Remember
this, O my soul! and be this thy com-
fort. And may the Lord enable both the
author and the reader, to see eye to eye the
riches of *reigning grace!*

Having endeavoured to shew, how grace
reigns in our salvation in *general*; I shall now
proceed, in the following chapters, to make it
appear that grace reigns more particularly, in
our *election* — *calling* — *pardon* — *justification* —
adoption — *sanctification* — and *perseverance* in
the faith, to eternal life. These are so many
essential branches of our salvation; and in the
vouchsafement of these capital blessings, grace
reigns; manifesting an authority and exerting
a power, truly divine and infinitely glorious.

C H A P. III.

Of Grace, as it reigns in our Election to eternal Glory.

AMONG the various blessings which flow from sovereign goodness, and are dispensed by reigning grace, that of *election* deservedly claims our first regard. It was in the busines of election that the grace of the infinite Sovereign did first appear, in choosing Christ as the head, and in him, as his members, all who should ever be saved. Election, therefore, is the first link in the golden chain of our salvation †, and the corner-stone in the amazing fabrick of human happiness.

As Jehovah is the former of universal nature, the supporter and governor of all worlds and all beings; and as it is not consistent with the perfection of an infinite Agent, to act without the highest and noblest design; so the adored Creator, before he imparted existence or time commenced, proposed and appointed an *end* worthy of Himself, in all he determined to do. This was his *own glory*. This was his grand design in all the various

† Rom. viii. 29, 30;

ranks of existence to which his almighty *fiat* gave birth *. Not a single creature in the vast scale of finite being, but is connected with this as its ultimate end. The loftiest seraph that surrounds the throne, and the meanest insect which crawls in the dust, have the same original Parent, and are designed to answer the same exalted end, in different ways. To deny this, or to suppose that the most perfect Agent did not act for the most worthy purpose, is infinitely derogatory to the dignity of the first Cause.

Nobly conspicuous, among the various orders of animate and inanimate existence in this lower creation, was *man*, when first formed and decent from the hands of his **Maker**. Man, therefore, as bearing the lively impress of his great Creator's image; possessing such elevated faculties and large capacities for operation and enjoyment; was designed, in a peculiar manner, to answer this highest of all purposes.—Nor was the entrance of sin subversive of the grand design, but made subservient to it in various ways. It was impossible that such an event should bring confusion into the stupendous plan of divine

* Prog. xvi. 4. Rom. xi. 36.

operation which consummate wisdom had formed. For, known to the omniscient God, are all his works and all events, from the beginning of the world. All that is comprehended in what men call *contingent*, is *absolute certainty* with Him who is perfect in knowledge. The entrance of sin, therefore, among moral agents, whether angels or men, could not possibly frustrate Jehovah's purpose, or render his original designs abortive. *The counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.*—And though the entrance of moral evil among mankind was an awful event; though *Adam* and every individual of his numerous offspring, were contaminated, injured, and ruined by it; yet it appears from divine revelation, that He who *declares the end from the beginning*, not only foresaw it, but from eternity determined to display his perfections and promote his manifestative glory by it. His determination was, to glorify himself in the complete salvation and endless felicity of some of the apostate race; and in the righteous condemnation of others. So that a revenue of glory shall arise to the great Supreme from all mankind. This glory shall arise, as well from that haughty *Egyptian* monarch, who renounced God's dominion

and

and said; *Who is Jehovah that I should obey him?* as from the king of *Israel*, whose exalted character is, *A man after God's own heart*—As well from a traitorous *Judas*, who sold his Master's blood; as from a faithful *Paul*, who counted not his very life dear, so that he might finish his course with joy and promote his Saviour's honour. *These* shall be the monuments of sovereign grace; *those* of righteous vengeance, and both for the glory of God to all eternity.—Nor is any thing more agreeable to right reason, or the sacred scripture, than to conclude; That as Jehovah is the first Cause, so he should be the last End; and, that he should be at the most perfect liberty to dispose of his offending creatures, in what way he pleases, for his own glory. To dispute this, is to deny his supremacy, and, with *Pharaoh*, to renounce his dominion.

Such being the final cause of the creation in general, and of mankind in particular, that sovereign Being who has an absolute right to do what he will with his own, having determined to create man and to leave him to the freedom of his own will, foreseeing he would certainly fall; of his *free, distinguishing love*, *chose a certain number out of the apostate race* of

of Adam, and ordained them to a participation of grace here, and to the enjoyment of glory hereafter. In the execution of which purpose, by means every way becoming the Deity, he determined to display and to glorify all his infinite excellencies. And this is that immanent act of God, which is commonly called *Election*, and is the subject of this chapter.

The doctrine of *election*; or, which is the same thing, the doctrine of *free, distinguishing grace*, is now generally exploded by our modern, rational, and polite divines. It is deemed unworthy of serious notice, by the learned and philosophic gentlemen of the present age. And though it cannot be denied to have made a considerable figure in those systems of divinity, which were adopted by men of eminence for piety and learning, in former ages; and particularly by our first Reformers from popery; yet *now* it is ranked among the rash opinions of a credulous antiquity. It is cashiered as a doctrine abhorrent to reason, and as at eternal war with the moral perfections of Jehovah. It is consigned over to oblivion as worthy of no more regard, than the bold enquiries and wild conclusions; the laborious trifling and learned lumber, of the ancient,

ancient, doting, popish school-men. It is traduced also, as a declared enemy to practical piety, and as highly injurious to the comfort and hope of mankind. This being the case we need not wonder, that it is now become quite unfashionable.

But what is the reason of this tragical outcry against it? If I be not greatly deceived, it is as follows. This doctrine lays the axe at the very root, of all our boasted moral excellency. This doctrine, in its native consequences, demolishes every subterfuge of human pride; as it leaves not the shadow of a difference between one man and another, why the Deity should regard and save *this* person rather than *that*; but teaches all who know and all who embrace it, to rest in that memorable maxim; *Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*; resolving the whole into divine grace and divine sovereignty. And, without paying the least compliment to the learning, sagacity, or character, of any who will dare to arraign the divine conduct; it repels their insolence in the following blunt manner; *Nay, but O man! who art thou that repliest against God?*—It further teaches, that as unmerited kindness and sovereign favour begun the work of salvation; so the same grace

grace must carry it on and complete the vast design: while the Most High, ever jealous of his honour, is determined to have all the glory. Other reasons might be mentioned, but these are quite sufficient to shew, that the spirit of independence, so natural to man, which reigns uncontrolled in the unregenerate, must be fired with resentment by such an attack upon it. Hence the few votaries of this unpopular doctrine, must expect reproach and ridicule, if not something more severe, to attend the profession of a tenet so unpolite.

It is not, however, my present design to enter upon a laboured defence of this offensive doctrine. I shall leave that to the friends of truth, who have more leisure and greater abilities; which, indeed, has been already often performed with great advantage to the church of God. I shall, therefore, content myself, with taking a short view of the *principal branches* of this article of the christian faith; with proposing a *few arguments*, which appear to me plain and pertinent, in vindication of it; and with pointing out its *proper improvement*.

That they who are called *the elect*, in the volume of inspiration, are a people distinguished from others, and that all mankind are not included under that denomination; are truths

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so evident as scarcely to need any proof. These are things so obvious, from the allowed signification of the term, and the tenour of divine revelation, as to leave no room for dispute.

—From the *signification of the term*. For where all, whether persons or things, are equally accepted, there is no preference given; there is no choice made; there are none left. But to *elect* and to *choose*, are the same thing. Where any are chosen, others must be refused.

—From the *tenour of divine revelation*. *I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen. I have chosen you out of the world. The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded* *.

And that they who are so denominated, are not *churches*, or *collective bodies*, appears with superior evidence from what is asserted concerning them, in the same infallible rule of our faith and practice. They are described, as having their *names written in heaven and in the book of life* †. They are said to be *ordained to eternal life*, and *chosen to complete salvation* ‡. And in the strongest and boldest manner imaginable, it is asked by one, who was thoroughly acquainted with their state and

* Joh. xiii. 18. and xv. 19. Rom. xi. 7. † Luke x. 20. Philip. iv. 3. Heb. xii. 23. Rev. xiii. 8. ‡ Acts xiii. 48. 2 Thess. ii. 13.

privileges;

privileges; *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect**?—Now a very small degree of discernment will enable us to conclude, that these things cannot be affirmed, with propriety and truth, concerning nations, churches, or communities of any sort, considered as such. But, on the contrary, they strongly imply, that the elect are *particular* persons, whose names are, in a peculiar manner, known to God, as distinguished from others; that election respects *spiritual* blessings and *eternal* enjoyments; and that the objects of it, are *dear to God*, and forever precious in his sight.

That the objects of election are particular persons, may further appear from hence. From the beginning Jehovah designed to manifest his love in the salvation of sinners. The damnation inflicted on many, puts it beyond dispute, that this design extended only to *some*; for *all* are not saved, and the divine purpose cannot be rendered void. This salvation was to be wrought by his own Son, as invested with the character and performing the work, of a mediator and surety. As a Mediator and Substitute, he was to obey, and bleed, and die; *die*, under a charge of the blackest guilt, and feeling the weight of the heaviest curse †. It was ne-

* Rom. viii. 33.

† 2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. iii. 13.

cessary, therefore, to be determined, *how many*, and *who in particular*, should be interested in this wonderful work and saved by it. Their *persons*, as well as their situation and wants, must be known to him and distinguished from others. For it is absurd to suppose, that he should engage as a substitute, to perform obedience and pour his blood ; to lay down his very life as a ransom to satisfy justice, and all this for persons unknown. When any one engages, in a legal way, to become responsible for another in matters of debt or offence ; he is always supposed to have some knowledge of the person for whom he engages, so as to be able to distinguish him from all others, who may be in similar circumstances and stand in the same need ; and the name of the person, whose cause he undertakes, must also be mentioned in the engagement, to render it valid.

Nor does it appear that the design of God in the salvation of sinners, by the incarnation and death of his Son, could have been *certainly* answered on any other hypothesis. Supposing, for instance, that it had been the divine purpose to save, by the mediation of Jesus, all who should ever *believe* ; without ascertaining the persons, who should thus embrace the Redeemer ; it would have remained dubious whether

whether any would be finally saved, because uncertain whether any would ever believe. But if it was certain that some would believe, this certainty must arise from the purpose of God; for nothing future can be absolutely certain, on any other foundation. And if it was determined that some should believe, the divine appointment must be considered as extending to every individual whose faith and salvation are supposed to be certain. For faith is a gift of grace, and could not be foreseen in any but such on whom the great Dispenser of every favour had determined to bestow it.— From hence we may safely infer, that as the death of Christ was absolutely certain, in virtue of a sovereign decree, and the eternal compact between the eternal Three; so all the individuals, who should ever be saved by the undertaking of Jesus, were chosen of God; were distinguished from others and given into his hands, as his peculiar charge*.

It is equally clear that the elect were chosen of God, not only before they had a being, but before *time began*. For their election is a fruit and effect of divine love. This love was from everlasting. The love of God to their

* COLES, *on God's Sovereignty*, Ed. 7. p. 58, 59.

persons and their election to complete and final felicity, have, therefore, an equal date. —If there had ever been a point in duration, in which the blessed God had no thoughts of a Mediator, nor any designs of manifesting his love to miserable and guilty creatures; then it might be supposed that there was an instant in which the favoured few, who are called *his elect*, were not the objects of his sovereign choice. But if it was Jehovah's eternal purpose to manifest the riches of his grace, by a Mediator*; and if the Deity, subsisting in three distinct Persons, and acting under the three distinct personal characters, of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Spirit*; did, before all worlds, resolve upon the measures to be pursued, and if a Mediator was appointed as the grand medium of divine operation in the wonderful work; then we may conclude, that the persons to be interested in this mediation and benefitted by it, were fixed upon and chosen. For both reason and revelation concur to forbid our supposing, that the Son of the Blessed should engage as mediator and act as a substitute, for he did not know whom; or, that the counsels of heaven should termi-

* Eph. iii. 11.

nate in mere peradventures. And it would be equally incongruous for us to imagine, that a resolution in the eternal Mind, concerning the work of *redemption*, which is evidently the *chief* of all the ways of God, should have any other date than eternity.

Expressly in our favour and in proof of the point, are the declarations of the Holy Ghost. Thus we read ; *God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation. He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world**.—They were *chosen in Christ*, as their head and representative. Christ and the elect constitute one mystical body. He the *head* and they the *members*; the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. *Before the foundation of the world*. This emphatical phrase is evidently expressive of *eternity*. Before the world was formed, or any creature existed, *time* did not commence. The commencement of time, and that of created existence, are exactly of the same date. Prior, therefore, to the formation of the universe, duration was *all eternity*; *absolute eternity*.—The same infallible writer in the same epistle, speaking of the amazing scheme of man's redemption, formed in the mind of God ;

* 2 Thess. ii. 13. Eph. i. 4,

calls it *the ETERNAL PURPOSE, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord**; which, as we have before proved, necessarily infers the choice of the objects of that redemption.

This truth may be further evinced by considering, that as the inheritance of glory was prepared for its future possessors, before the foundation of the world; so grace and all spiritual blessings, which were necessary to fit them for the enjoyment of it, were *given them in Christ Jesus*; were lodged in his hands, as their fæderal head; as the appointed mediator, and for their use, *before the world began*†.—Nor can we conceive of any *new* determinations arising in the eternal Mind, or any purposes formed by our Maker, which were not from everlasting; without supposing him defective in knowledge, or mutable in his perfections. Suppositions these, which very ill become the character of Him, whose name is JEHOVAH.

But is there any reason assignable, why the elect were chosen to life and glory, while others were left in their sins to perish under divine wrath? None in the creature. For all mankind were viewed, as in the *same* situation,

* Eph. iii. 11.
Eph. i. 3, 4.

† Matt. xxv. 34.

2 Tim. i. 9.

and

and on a *perfect* level, considered in themselves.—Notwithstanding the great Author of all things and Lord of the world, condescends to assign the reason when he says; *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.* In this the adored Redeemer perfectly acquiesced, as appears from those remarkable words; *Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* In this also, the penetrating judgment of that wonderful man, who was caught up to the third heavens, rested completely satisfied*. And in the same reason, of the divine procedure, we ought all to rest, without a murmuring word, or an opposing thought. Nor can we rebel against the sovereign determinations of the Most High, without incurring flagrant guilt; or persist in so doing, and escape with impunity.

But supposing there was no *original* difference, between the objects of distinguishing grace, and those who finally perish; yet did not the Omniscient *foresee* them as possessed of faith, fruitful in holy obedience, and persevering in it to the end? and were not these considered, by a righteous God, as the cause why he chose them rather than others, who

* Rom. ix. 15, 16.

were viewed as destitute of such recommendations? By no means. For grace *reigns*, in the choice of all the elect. And grace, as a sovereign, rejects with disdain every such proud pretence to a claim upon her, as is here supposed. She never affords her smiles to any because they are *worthy*. She ennobles none, because they are *better* than others. So to do would be quite inconsistent with her amiable character; would be utterly subversive of her grand design. Whenever she bestows her kind regards, it is with the condescension of an *absolute sovereign*. Wherever she interposes her helping hand, it is on the behalf of such, who have no other relief, nor any other plea. But, as a further proof of my negative, I would offer the following arguments.

Faith in Jesus and holy obedience, are represented by the unerring Spirit, as the *fruits* and *effects* of election: they cannot, therefore, be considered as the *cause*, without absurdity in reason, and a contradiction to divine revelation. For it is written; *As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed. He hath chosen us—that we might be holy.* They believed, because they were *ordained to eternal life*; not ordained to eternal life, because it was foreseen they would believe. They were

were chosen, not because they *were*, or ever *would be* holy; but that they *might be* so †.—They and they only partake of faith, who are *called* by divine grace: but such only are called to faith and holiness, who were predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ. For *whom he did predestinate, them he also called**.—Again; The chosen of God alone are the *sheep* of Christ. None but they who are so denominated believe on him, according to his own declaration; *Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep* ‡. By which we are taught, that believing in Him does not *make* us his sheep, or give us a *right* to the character; but is an evidence that we were so considered, in the sight of God, and given into the hands of the great Shepherd to be saved by him.—Once more: God *bath called us with an holy calling, not according to*, not in consideration of *our works*, whether past or future; *but according to his own purpose and grace, which he purposed in Christ Jesus, before the world began* §. If, then, we are not called according to our works or worthiness, but according to the everlasting purpose, and free distinguishing

† Acts xiii. 48. Eph. i. 4.

* Rom. viii. 29.

‡ John x. 26.

§ 2 Tim. i. 9,

grace of Him, who *worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*; much less is it to be supposed, that we were *chosen* according to them, or in foresight of them.

To illustrate the truth and confirm the argument, it may be further observed; That faith and holiness, in the Methods of grace, occupy a middle station. They are neither the foundation nor the top-stone, in the spiritual building. Though inseparably connected with election, they are neither its *cause* nor its *consummation*. *That* is sovereign grace; *this* infinite glory —Faith and holiness are, as one observes, what stalks and branches are to a root; by which the vegetable juices ascend, to produce and ripen the principal fruit. *By grace ye are saved THROUGH faith. Chosen to salvation, THROUGH sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.* Consequently, they are no more the *cause* of election, than the means necessary to attain any valuable end, are the cause of appointing that end; than which nothing can be supposed more absurd. —Besides, if men were foreseen as possessed of faith and holiness, *prior* to their election and *independent* on it; it is hard to conceive what occasion there was for their being elected at all. There could be no necessity for it, to secure

secure their final happiness. For the Judge of all the earth must do right. And eternal misery was never designed to be the portion of any who believe and are holy; for peace and salvation are inseparably joined to such a state and such characters †. To have ordained such to happiness and glory, as were foreseen to be thus qualified, would, therefore, have been altogether unnecessary.

Further: Election depends on the *mere good pleasure* of God, without any motive in the creature to influence the divine will. No other cause is assigned by *Paul*, when stating and defending the doctrine; no other reason is given by his divine Master. The former asserts, that the King immortal *predestinated us—according to the good pleasure of his will*. That *it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*. *Therefore bath he mercy on whom he will**— And the latter with joy declares; *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast bid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight* ‡. That revelation which is here designed, is

† John v. 24. 1 Pet. i. 9. * Eph. i. 5. Rom. ix. 16, 18. ‡ Matt. xi. 25, 26.

no other than the *execution* of the divine purpose in election. And the only reason assigned by Him who is the wisdom of God, and perfectly acquainted with the counsels of heaven, why the mysteries of the gospel are revealed to some; while others of superior abilities and greater reputation among their fellow-creatures, are left in absolute ignorance of them and suffered to oppose them to their aggravated ruin; is, the sovereign pleasure of Him, who *giveth no account of any of his matters.*

Much to our purpose are the words of *Paul*, when professedly handling the subject, and largely defending the doctrine, of divine election. *The children not being yet born*, and, consequently, *neither having done any good or evil*, to obtain the approbation or provoke the resentment of their Creator; *that the purpose of God according to election might stand*; *not of works*, or worthiness in the objects of it, *but of the grace of him that calleth*: it was said concerning *Jacob* and *Esau*, as an instance of the divine procedure towards mankind in general, and as an evidence of the truth of the doctrine; *the elder shall serve the younger* *.—And again: *There is a remnant*, a very small

* Rom. ix. 11, 12.

number,

number, according to the election of grace. This assertion the sacred disputant proceeds to confirm, by the following nervous argument—an argument taken from the nature of grace, as contradistinguished to all *works* and worthiness of every kind. *And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work**.

—Here the truth under consideration, is asserted in the plainest manner: here it is defended by the strongest reasoning. So that if any submission of our judgment and conscience, be due to the positive dictates of the infallible Spirit; if any regard ought to be paid, to a demonstrative argument urged by the Lord's ambassador; here it is due, and here it ought to be paid.—Here we are taught, and here it is proved, that our election to eternal glory, must be either entirely of *grace*, or entirely of *works*; grace and works being directly opposite. They cannot, therefore, unite in producing the same event, and promoting the same end. Whoever, then, acknowledges that there is any such thing as an election of sinners to future happiness, must necessarily

* Rom. xi. 5, 6.

maintain;

maintain ; either that the sole reason why they were chosen rather than others, was their own *superior worthiness*, without grace being concerned at all in the choice ; and so their election is an act of remunerative justice : Or, that they were considered *equally unworthy* of the divine regards, as any of those who perish ; and so their election is an act of mere, sovereign grace. One of these he must hold, in opposition to the other. For if there be any other alternative, the apostle's argument is weak and inconclusive. There is no reconciling expedient, which can be devised by the wit of man. We may attempt a coalition between works and grace, but it will be found absolutely impracticable : while our pride and our folly, in so doing, will be great, and our disappointment certain. For such an attempt, would not only bring the greatest confusion into all our ideas about works and grace ; but, as far as possible, destroy the very things themselves.—Such persons as maintain the contrary hypothesis, may, to save appearances, *say* that election is of *grace* ; but if it be on a foresight of faith and obedience, there is, in reality, nothing of *grace* in it : for grace is *free favour*. On this supposition, election is no other, *than an appointment of a reward*

to its objects; on a foresight of the requisite conditions being prescribed to them and performed by them. And as such, it is an act of remunerative justice; or at least, of fidelity and truth: but cannot, without open violence to the common signification of the terms, be denominated an act of *free* love and *pure* benevolence *.

Once more: That it is the design of *Paul*, when handling the subject in his epistle to the *Romans*, to exclude all consideration of human worthiness, and to resolve the election of those who are saved *entirely* into the grace of God, as infinitely free and divinely sovereign; appears from those *objections* to which he replies. For the objections which are made and the answers returned, are of such a nature, as would appear quite *impertinent*, and without the *least shadow* of a reason to support them; on supposition that God, when he chose his people, had any regard to their superior worthiness, in comparison with those who perish. The objections suppose, that the divine conduct, in that affair, is *inequitable*. But such a supposition could never have been made, such a charge could never have been laid against

* TUCK. *Præfet. Theol.* par. ii. p. 81.

EDWARD TUCKER. D.D. BISHOP OF LICHFIELD. 1670.

1670.

it, by any man of sense or the least reflection; if the Almighty, in the decree of election, had proceeded to distinguish between one man and another, according to their personal qualities and inherent worth.

The infallible writer having treated about God's distinguishing love to *Jacob*, and his rejection of *Esau*, starts an objection against the tenour of his arguing and the truth he maintained; an objection which he knew was both plausible and common. *What shall we say then*; what will be inferred as the necessary consequence of our foregoing assertion? Will any one dare to conclude, that there is *unrighteousness with God*, because he dispenses or with-holds his favours according to his own sovereign pleasure? *Far be it!* Such a consequence will be held in the utmost abhorrence, by all who revere their Maker.—The apostle having rejected the shocking inference in the strongest manner, proceeds to confirm his assertions and prove his doctrine. This he does by appealing to the ancient scriptures. *For He*, whose name is JEHOVAH, *saith to Moses*; *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.* From which memorable and ancient oracle, he infers

infers the following conclusion. *So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy* *. From hence it appears with striking evidence, that it was *Paul's* design to prove; not only that there *was* an election of some of the fallen race, in contradistinction to others; but also that the happy objects of the divine choice were appointed to glory, not in consideration of any thing which caused them to differ from others; but *purely, solely, entirely*, because it was the good-pleasure of God, to make them partakers of that mercy on which they had not the least claim, any more than those who perish. For, on a supposition of the contrary, it does not appear that his citation from the writings of *Moses*, and the conclusion he forms upon it, were at all to his purpose; but are adapted to mislead his reader, and bias his judgment in favour of error.

The zealous and indefatigable teacher of heavenly truth, in prosecuting his subject, meets with another objection which he is equally careful to obviate. For, after having asserted that *Jehovah* has *mercy on whom*

* Rom. ix. 15, 16.

he will, and whom he will he hardeneth ; he adds, *Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth He yet find fault with any of his creatures, or blame their conduct ? for who hath resisted his will, or rendered his purposes void ?* — This objection exhibits a faithful mirror, in which every opposer of divine sovereignty may see his face and read his character. The most horrid and shocking consequences which are now charged on the doctrine of eternal, unconditional, and personal election, are here included and reduced to a small compass. This objection, in modern stile, stands thus. “ According to the *Calvinistic* doctrine of election, men are mere machines. They are impelled to do this or that, by a fatal necessity. They are no longer the proper objects of praise or blame, of reward or punishment. Adieu, therefore, to every virtuous action and all praise-worthy deeds. Whether we be righteous or wicked here ; whether we be saved or damned hereafter ; an arbitrary will and a sovereign, omnipotent decree, are the cause of all.” — Such persons, however, as are inclined to repeat the stale objection, would do well to consider, in what manner the apostle refutes it ; and how ~~she~~ treats the proud opposer of the sovereign prerogative

prerogative of the great Supreme. The objection is levelled against the sovereignty of God, in making such an immense distinction between persons equally unworthy of divine clemency. But though it be bold and blasphemous to the last degree, the unerring teacher does not refute, or attempt to remove it, by informing the objector; That it was not his design, by the immediately foregoing assertion, to affirm, that the sole cause of that infinite difference which shall subsist to eternity between the state of one man and another, equally guilty and alike miserable, considered in themselves; was the free, sovereign pleasure of God. No; he is far from giving any such hint; but immediately recurs to the *supreme dominion* of Him who formed the universe, as a consideration of sufficient importance and sufficiently clear, to establish the point. And he is so far from softening his former assertions, however harsh they might seem; that he at once confirms the truth he asserted, and illustrates the propriety of the language he used.—In doing of which he suggests, that the objection, horrid as it is, cannot have the least force, or pertinency of application, except it were proved; That the Majesty of heaven has not an absolute right

to dispense his favours just as he pleases. But this the resolute assertor of Jehovah's honour, was not willing to grant. This he could by no means allow, without *denying the God that is above.* He therefore boldly repels the confidence of the proud objector, by a strong exclamation and a mortifying query. *Nay, but, O man! who art thou that repliest against God?* Shall a worm of the earth, an insect, an atom; arraign his conduct, who is Lord of the universe, and pronounce it unrighteous? Shall impotence and dust fly in the face of Omnipotence? Shall corruption and guilt prescribe rules of equity, by which the Most Holy shall regulate his behaviour towards the rebellious subjects of his boundless empire? Far be it! *Wo to him that striveth with his Maker!* *Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth!*†; but let not the despicable fragment presume to make war upon heaven; lest divine wrath, like a devouring fire, break out and consume it.

The zealous and cautious disputant, having severely rebuked the opposer's folly and arrogance, proceeds to confirm his assertion and illustrate the momentous truth by a familiar in-

† Isa. xlvi. 9.

stance,

stance, and by appealing to the common sense of mankind. *Shall the thing formed, say to him that formed it; Why hast thou made me thus?* For example: *Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?* none can deny it. And is such a power allowed, by the common consent of mankind, to belong to the meanest artificer; and shall it be denied to HIM who is the former of all things? so to act, would be a monstrous compound of absurdity and blasphemy.—The apostle now proceeds to apply his illustration. *What if God, willing to shew his wrath and to make his power known, having endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, by their own rebellion against him, should, in the end, pour out his vengeance upon them; who shall dare to pronounce his conduct unrighteous?* *And, what if the same sovereign Being, that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory; determined to manifest infinite love in their complete deliverance from deserved destruction, who has a right to complain †?* Shall the eye of any be evil, because

† Rom. ix. 18—23.

their injured Maker is good? Has he not an eternal right to do what he will with his own? Or, is he a debtor to any of his creatures? if so, they shall be fully recompensed. —Shall every petty sovereign, in the kingdoms of this world, be allowed to choose his own favourites; and, in certain cases, to manifest his clemency to some delinquents, while he leaves others to suffer the due desert of their crimes, without being subject to the control of his meanest subjects in the performance of those sovereign acts? and shall HE who rules over all, be denied the exercise of his supreme, royal prerogative? Absurd, in supposition! impossible, in fact!

Hence it appears, that if we consider the Almighty as choosing any of the fallen race to life and happiness; we behold him manifesting the mercy of a *compassionate father* to his miserable offspring. But if we consider him, as choosing *this* person rather than *that*, when both were equally wretched; we view him as invested with the character of a *sovereign Lord*, and as the sole proprietor of his own favours. If, therefore, the question be asked; why *any* were chosen to salvation, when *all* deserved to perish? The answer is; Because our Maker is merciful. But if it be further

further asked; why *Paul*, for instance, was chosen rather than *Judas*? The answer is; Because he is Lord of all, and has an indisputable right to do what he will with his own *.—But if this answer will not satisfy the curious enquirer, he is advised by the Holy Ghost, to go and ask the potter; What was the reason of his very different procedure with the same lump of clay? and why he formed the vessels into which it was wrought, for such different and opposite uses? The illiterate artificer will readily answer; as directed by common sense; “ Not any thing in the clay itself; but my own free choice. For it was of the same kind, and possessed the same qualities throughout the whole mass: nor could one part dictate how it would be formed, or for what uses, any more than another.” Thus the most ignorant potter, without hesitation, would assert a kind of sovereignty over his clay. And are not mankind in the hand of God, as clay in the hand of the potter? Or, shall Jehovah’s sovereignty over his offending creatures, be inferior to that of a puny mortal over passive matter? Reason and revelation forbid the thought!

* PICT. *Theol. Christ.* l. 7. c. 1. § 16. *Genev.* 1716.

—In election, therefore, we have a striking display of divine *grace* in its utmost freeness; and of God's *dominion* in its highest sovereignty. Of the *former*, towards the vessels of *mercy*; of the *latter*, towards all mankind. *That* we behold with admiration and joy; *this* we revere in silence: well remembering who it is that says; **BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.**

Having shewn, in the preceding paragraphs, that election is an act of sovereign, free, uninfluenced grace; I now proceed to consider the great *end*, which the universal Lord, designed by it. The ultimate end, is his own *eternal glory*; and subordinate to it, the *complete happiness* of all his people. The glory of the supreme Being, is, as before observed, the final cause of all the eternal counsels and of all divine operations in general; and especially of those which respect the salvation of sinners. They were all designed for **THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORIOUS GRACE.**

Too ready we are to imagine, that the purpose and pleasure of God terminate, in the *happiness* of those who are chosen, or in the *misery* of those rejected; as though the eternal felicity, or the everlasting torment of

the

the creature, were the final cause of the divine decree. But this is a great mistake, and represents the doctrine of predestination in a very *false*, as well as *unfavourable* light. For as it would be pregnant with blasphemy for us to suppose, that He who is supremely blessed and supremely good, should take delight in the infinite misery of a rational being, without reference to a further and nobler end ; so we cannot conceive, on any principles of reason or scripture, that he should propose any thing short of his own glory in the wonderful œconomy of human salvation*. And as it would be highly injurious to the divine character for us to suppose, that the *misery* of the creature is the ultimate end at which the eternal sovereign aims, in the damnation of those who perish ; or that any thing short of his own glory, in the displays of his spotless purity and inflexible justice, was the end which he had in view ; so it would be greatly unworthy of his infinite wisdom and boundless perfection for us to imagine, that the glory of his own grace, and the everlasting honour of all his adorable excellencies, were not his *supreme design*, in the free election and complete felicity of all his people. Does He

* VITRING. Aphor. Theol. Aph. 161.

pour out his vengeance on any of the works of his hands? it is to demonstrate the infinite opposition of all his perfections to moral evil, and for the honour of his eternal justice, as a righteous Governour. Does He spare any of the rebellious subjects of his vast dominions, and save them from the death they deserved? it is to display his mercy, in connection with truth and righteousness, and for the glory of all his unchangeable attributes. We may, therefore, conclude with *Paul*, that the great end of election, and of all its consequent blessings, is no other, than to *make known the RICHES OF GOD'S GLORY on the vessels of mercy* †.

And as the eternal glory of God, in the consummate happiness of his chosen, is the exalted *end* of the decree of election; so the *means* appointed to accomplish the wonderful *design*, are equally worthy of infinite wisdom. They are such as proclaim, *the just God and the Saviour*; such as demand the testimony of conscience, that *the Lord is holy in all his ways and righteous in all his works*.—The principal of these means undoubtedly are, the *incarnation* of the eternal Son and his divine *mediation*; the *sanctification* of the Spirit and *belief* of the truth. For thus we read: *God*

† Rom. ix. 23. Eph. i. 5, 6.

bath appointed us to obtain salvation, by our Lord Jesus Christ. He bath chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*.—Redemption by the blood of Jesus, and sanctification by the Spirit of God, are equally necessary to accomplish, the great design. For as there is no remission without shedding of blood; so without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. And as none shall be condemned to final perdition, but they who did such things as were worthy of death; so none shall enjoy the inheritance of glory, but they whom impartial justice shall entirely acquit, and immaculate holiness completely approve. And as none of the damned shall ever be able to assign any other cause of their infinite torment, but that sin which they freely committed; so all the elect shall ascribe their salvation, to the grace of God and the work of Immanuel.—We may, therefore, conclude, that though Christ and his mediation were not the cause of election; yet his obedience and death, were the grand means appointed for the execution of the gracious purpose. And, though the Almighty chose no man to glory, because of his future faith and obedience; yet provision was made, in the sovereign decree,

* 1 Thess. v. 9. 2 Thess. ii. 13.

for

for the *sanctification* of all its objects, prior to their enjoyment of bliss.

The purpose of God, in election, is also *immutable*, and *infallibly connected* with the eternal felicity of all its objects.—That this decree is unchangeable, appears from the immutability of the divine purposes in general. For there is the same reason that the appointment of God, in the choice of his people, should unchangeably stand, as there is for any other of his eternal designs. And that immutability is stamped upon the divine decrees in general, the scriptures abundantly shew. Thus it is written: *The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what his soul desireth, even that He doth. To shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel. Who hath resisted his will? That the purpose of God according to election might stand. With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning* *.

* Isa. xiv. 27. and xlvi. 10. Job xxiii. 13. Heb. vi. 17. Rom. ix. 11. 19. Jam. i. 17.

Nor can we suppose that God should reverse his decrees or alter his purposes, without impeaching his omniscience, as though he did not *foresee* the events which would happen; or his power, as if he were not *able* to execute his own designs: neither of which can possibly be the case with that infinite Being, whose will is fate, and whose word is the basis of the universe.—If God were to change his mind, it must be either for the better, or the worse. If for the better, he was not perfectly wise in his former purpose. If for the worse, he is not wise in his present resolve. For there can be no alteration without a tacit reflection on the past, or present determination. If a man change his resolution, he is apprehensive of some defect in his former purpose, which moves him to such a change. And this must arise, either from a want of capacity to foresee, or from not duly considering the object of his counsel. But neither of these can be supposed of Him who is supremely wise, without denying his Deity. A change of purpose may, indeed, be an act of wisdom in the creature; but it proceeds on a conviction of folly in his former actions, which is inconsistent with consummate perfection.—The *only wise God* has no occasion

occasion for *second thoughts*. As He is wise to perfection, he sees no cause of reversing his purposes, or altering his conduct. And as He is boundless in power, he is subject to no control in executing his will, and making his people partakers of those blessings he designed for them*. To suppose, therefore, that any who were chosen to eternal glory should finally fail of enjoying it; is an imagination absurdly impious: as it suggests a charge of palpable imperfection against JEHOVAH, and would make him *altogether such an one as ourselves*.

Again: That election is infallibly connected with eternal happiness, appears from the following remarkable passage. *Whom He did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us †?*—If the purpose of God, in election, be not immutable; or if the objects of it may possibly fall short of the glorious end; there would be no certain connection between the several blessings which are here mentioned. On such a supposition,

* CHARN. *Works*, v. i. p. 397.

† Rom. viii. 30, 31.

to argue, as the apostle does, from the *past election* of any persons, to their *future glorification*; or to infer *this* from *that*, would be exceeding weak, and the inference a gross inconsequence. Nor would there have been any propriety in his joyful exclamation; *What shall we then say to these things?* nor any solid foundation for his bold conclusion; *If God be for us, who can be against us?* For, admitting that God may possibly change his purpose; or, that his decree may prove weak and ineffectual, so that in any instance the event designed by it may not be produced; there was but little reason for *Paul*, thus to exclaim with admiration and joy, or thus to conclude with a steady confidence upon his everlasting happiness, from the consideration of God's electing love to his soul. To impute such a kind of unmeaning and inconclusive argumentation to him, would be an high reflection upon him, as *Gamaliel's* pupil; would be absolutely inconsistent with his more exalted character, as an *amanuensis* to the Spirit of wisdom. We may, therefore, safely conclude, that election to future happiness, and the certain enjoyment of it, can never be separated. For, *whom He did predestinate—them He also glorified.*

Having considered this important truth under the several foregoing views, I shall now proceed to shew, that it is a *doctrine according to godliness*; and that it is nobly adapted to promote the holiness and comfort of the true christian. As an article of that faith which was once delivered to the saints; as an infallible truth of the gospel, its tendency must be salutary, its influences must be sanctifying, on all who cordially embrace it. Such will ever find, that it wears the most friendly aspect on their progress in real holiness, and their enjoyment of substantial peace.—Could it be proved, that it has no influence on these, we might venture, without hesitation, to renounce it as an error and abhor it as an enemy. For that is no part of evangelical truth, which, in its genuine tendency, is not adapted to promote the happiness of the real christian, and advance the interests of true holiness. But this is not the case with the doctrine under consideration. For, a frequent and devout meditation upon it, by those who are taught from above, and who view it in its proper connections; is evidently calculated, to *bumble* their souls in the dust before the eternal Sovereign; to inflame their hearts with *love* to his adorable name;

and

and to excite their *gratitude* for benefits received and blessings expected: consequently, their holiness and comfort must be advanced by it; for humility, love, and gratitude, are the very *vitals* of all real religion. As these abound in the heart, our spiritual joys are increased, and our maker is glorified. As these abate, we lose the favour of divine things, and the interests of religion decline. And where these have no existence, the most extensive round of duties, the most costly and shining performances, are of no esteem in the sight of God.

This doctrine is adapted to promote *genuine humility*. For it teaches, that all mankind, in their natural state, are equally obnoxious to wrath and exposed to ruin; and, exclusive of that grace which appears and reigns in election, in a condition absolutely desperate. It allows not the least liberty for any of the sons of men, to lay claim to superior worth, or glory over their fellows. And when self-admiring thoughts arise in the christian's breast, it stops them short with the needful and sharp rebuke; *Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou*

glory as if thou hadst not received it * ?—They, therefore, who are the favoured objects of distinguishing love, and who look for salvation by it; discovering that their persons are alike sinful and their state equally wretched, considered in themselves, as the persons or state of those who finally perish; cannot, according to the genius of this doctrine, but lie low in humility before their God. Being fully convinced that the eternal choice of their persons, was not on account of the *least possible difference* between themselves and others; and that the *whole reason* of their hope centers in that grace which might have been manifested to others, with as much propriety as it is to them, had the great Sovereign so determined; they are at all times free to acknowledge, that the *chief* of sinners and the most *worthless* of objects, are their proper characters. The influence of this humbling truth they feel in their consciences, and their ardent desire is to express it in their lives.

Let us attend the believer in his secret retirements; let us behold him on his bended knee, and hear him pouring out his soul to God. In his intercourse with heaven, at the

* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

throne

throne of grace, his language will be to the following import.—“ O THOU, who art “ glorious in holiness, and the infinite Sov-“ reign of all worlds; who humbleſt thyſelf “ to behold the things that are in the highest “ heavens*; whoſe condescenſion is unspeak-“ ably great, in deigning to regard the per-“ sons or services, of the most holy and ex-“ alted of creatures; didſt THOU conſider “ me in my low estate, as a fallen creature “ and a miserable finner? Did thine eternal “ love fix on me as its objeſt, when I might, “ with the greatest equity, have been marked “ out as a proper victim for eternal vengeance? “ Is not my perſon polluted, and my ſtate, “ by nature, damnable; is not my original “ depravity as great, and my actual transgref-“ ſions as numerous, as any which can be “ found among the apostate ſons of *Adam*? “ and haſt Thou determined to make me an “ everlasting monument of ſparing mercy, “ while millions are left to ſuffer the awful “ deſert of their crimes?—Nothing in me “ couldſt thou behold, but a ſhocking com-“ pound of impurity and folly, of guilt and “ wretchedneſs. Nothing in all my conduſt

* Ps. cxlii, 6.

“ couldst thou foresee, but what was adapt-
“ ed to provoke thine abhorrence, rather
“ than win thy regards. O, thou majestic
“ Being ! why such mercy to an hardened
“ rebel ? why such love to an inveterate ene-
“ my ? Obliged I am, in the court of con-
“ science, to plead guilty to the complicated
“ charge which thine own righteous law ex-
“ hibits against me. Motive or cause of thy
“ tender regards, I can find none in myself.
“ Thine own *sovereign* will, thine own *free*
“ pleasure ; these are the *sole* cause why mer-
“ cy is manifested to me, of sinners the vilest.
“ For, should a wretch who is now in hell,
“ advance a claim on thy favour, grounded
“ on his own worthiness, I must acknow-
“ ledge it as well founded as any to which I
“ can pretend.—*Pride* ! thou most detestable
“ of all tempers, for ever depart from my
“ breast ! *Humility* ! thou fairest flower of
“ heavenly origin, thou brightest ornament
“ of the christian character ; be thou my
“ constant companion, be thou the livery in
“ which I shall always appear ! Shall a mis-
“ creant, who might have been justly doomed
“ to damnation ; shall a worthless worm,
“ that is beholden to grace for his all ; enter-
“ tain aspiring thoughts, or assert his own
“ im-

“ importance? as well might *Lucifer* himself challenge a feat in paradise.—O, my God! let me but view thine electing love in all its freeness, and thy distinguishing favour in all its sovereignty; and I shall be truly humble. Then shall my soul lie low in the dust, and reigning grace shall have the glory of all my salvation. Whatever blessings I now possess, whatever enjoyments I hereafter expect; I freely acknowledge, that the unrivalled honour belongs to Thee.”

Nor is the doctrine maintained less adapted to inflame the heart with the *purest love*. *Love is of God: he, therefore, who dwells in love, dwells in God and God in him.*—“ And didst Thou, who needest not the services of angels; who art infinitely perfect and infinitely happy in thine own eternal Self, will the elect and regenerate soul say—didst Thou entertain thoughts of love towards me, before the foundations of the world were laid? did thy purposes of communicating bliss terminate, on a worm so mean, on a wretch so vile, as myself? *How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!* *how great is the sum of them!*—Didst Thou

“ record my worthless name in the book of
“ life, and constitute me a member of that
“ mystical body, of which Christ is the head?
“ Were my person and all my immortal in-
“ terests consigned over, by an irreversible
“ grant, into the hands of thine only Son, as
“ the appointed Mediator, in order to secure
“ my eternal happiness beyond the possibility
“ of a failure? Didst thou, my God, in the
“ original plan of salvation, provide for the
“ honour of thy justice, as well as the glory
“ of thy grace, by appointing a Surety to
“ perform the obedience, to which I am
“ bound as a *creature*, and to suffer the pu-
“ nishment, which I deserve as a *criminal*?
“ And, in order to effect the amazing design,
“ didst Thou determine, before I had a being
“ or time commenced, to deliver up the Son
“ of thy love, clothed in humanity, to the
“ stroke of incensed justice and the execrable
“ death of the cross? and all this to rescue
“ and save, to ennable and dignify—what?
“ be astonished, O ye heavens, at this!—a
“ *rebellious worm*, a *despicable insect*; elated
“ with pride and replete with enmity against
“ Thee, O thou Greatest and Best of Beings!
“ Stupendous goodness! Marvellous grace!—

“ O,

“ O, my God ! was I the object of thine eternal choice, when viewed by omniscience, as fallen under guilt and sunk in ruin ; lothsome as the dunghill, and abhorrent as hell ? and shall not my best affections and warmest love, be devoted to Thee ? Didst Thou number me among the objects of grace, when thou mightest, with honour to thy crown and dignity, as a righteous Governour, have consigned me over to endless perdition ; and shall not my heart flame with love to thine adorable name ? Didst Thou love and choose me, when deformed and filthy, possessed of dispositions partly brutal and partly diabolical ? and art Thou infinitely amiable in all thy perfections, and completely righteous in all thy ways, and shall not my very soul love and adore Thee ? Hast Thou, of thine own mere grace, distinguished me as an object of thy complacential regards ; and shalt not Thou be the single object of my warmest passions and most intense desires ? Yes, blessed Lord ! Come, possess my heart and sway my affections ! Thine they are, and thine, through grace, they shall ever be. Depart from me, ye rivals of my God ! Ye idols of unregenerate hearts, pleasure, wealth,

“ wealth, pomp and power, get you hence!
“ Address me no more with your soft solici-
“ tations; entice me no more with your
“ gilded baits. JEHOVAH has condescended
“ to take me for his own; I choose him for
“ my portion, I love him as my all.”

The attentive consideration of this momentous truth, is also a noble incentive to *gratitude*. *Gratitude* is a delightful disposition and an amiable temper. It burns in heavenly bosoms, tunes the harps of the celestial choirs, and gives the sweetest accent to all their songs. *Love* to the infinitely amiable God, and *gratitude* to him for his boundless beneficence; these enter into the essence of all religion; these are the very life and soul of all intellectual happiness. In proportion, therefore, as these are promoted, the holiness and comfort of mankind are advanced. —That an interest in the election of grace, and a sense of it warm on the heart, are a powerful incentive to the most generous gratitude, we may boldly assert, as we have an authority which none can dispute. *Paul*, we find, when contemplating the riches of grace in eternal election, which were manifested to him and his brethren, breaks out in the following language. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who bath*

hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; ACCORDING AS HE HATH CHOSEN US IN HIM BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD †. And again: *We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord; BECAUSE GOD HATH, FROM THE BEGINNING, CHOSEN YOU TO SALVATION *.*—Such are the grateful acknowledgments the apostle makes, on the behalf of himself and his brethren, to the Author of all good, in reference to their election. And similar will be the sentiments of gratitude in every regenerate heart, in proportion as this important truth is known and experienced.

Let us once more listen to the devout addresses and humble acknowledgments of the believer, when bending the suppliant knee before his Father.—“ O Thou, who art infinitely exalted above all blessings and praise! “ what shall I render to Thee for all thy benefits? Hast Thou, my Father, and Thou, my God, chosen me to holiness, chosen me to eternal life, and that of thy mere, un-influenced grace; and shall not thy glory be the end of all my actions, so long as I possess either breath or being? Didst Thou

† Eph. i. 3, 4. * 2 Thess. iii. 13. 1 Thess. i. 2, 4.

“ enter

“ enter into an everlasting covenant, with
“ the Son of thy love, to save me from ruin
“ and bring me to immortal bliss; and shall
“ not I freely engage with hand and heart
“ to be thine for ever? Thine I am, by right
“ of creation; thine I am, by electing love;
“ and thine I would eternally be, in the per-
“ formance of every duty, and the exercise
“ of all my powers.—Were the treasures of
“ infinite wisdom displayed, in contriving
“ the way and appointing the necessary means,
“ for my complete felicity; were the stores
“ of unbounded mercy and the riches of so-
“ vereign grace, laid open in the eternal coun-
“ sels of peace, on my behalf; and shall not
“ my *life*, my *soul*, my everlasting *all*, which
“ are saved at so great an expence, be devoted
“ to Thee? Bind me, O blessed God! for ever
“ bind me to thyself, with the delightful cords
“ of love; that I may never desert thy ser-
“ vice, that I may never dishonour thy name.
“ *Dishonour THEE?* painful thought! May I
“ ever choose to die a thousand deaths, rather
“ than act a part so disingenuous.—Hast
“ thou chosen me out of the world; did
“ thine eye pity and spare my guilty soul,
“ while numbers were left in the ruins of
“ the fall, in their perishing state; and, do
“ not

“ not reason and conscience, do not all the
“ sentiments of honour and gratitude, of
“ which the human heart is susceptible, con-
“ spire with divine revelation to shew, that I
“ am laid under infinite obligations to admire
“ thy goodness and continually speak thy
“ praise? Such an everlasting and immense
“ distinction, which Thou hast made in elec-
“ tion, between creatures equally deserving
“ of punishment, challenges, from the objects
“ of discriminating love, all possible thankful-
“ ness. Lord, here I am thy devoted ser-
“ vant. To love and adore thy perfections, to
“ know and perform thy will; be all my de-
“ light and all my employ. I bow before Thee,
“ and acknowledge myself eternally thine.
“ I yield myself up entirely to thy disposal,
“ as my only and sovereign Lord. As un-
“ formed clay in the hand of the potter, to
“ be moulded and fashioned according to
“ thine own will, I commit myself and all
“ my concerns to Thee.”—Such is the fa-
lutary tendency of the doctrine, and such the
language of all who know it in truth, in pro-
portion as faith is in exercise.

But however comfortable this truth may be,
to such as are persuaded of their interest in
the love of God; is it not calculated to *dis-*

courage

courage the enquiring soul, and to overwhelm the awakened sinner with *desponding fears*? Does it not administer abundant occasion for the anxious mind thus to reflect? “ I know “ not whether Christ and his salvation be “ *free* for me. If I be not of the number of “ God’s elect, I have evidently no interest “ in him, nor in any thing which he has “ done. And however much I may desire to “ believe and be saved by him, I never shall, “ if not ordained to eternal life.”—This objection, however plausible it may seem, or however much the consciences of any awakened sinners may be harassed by it, is weak and impertinent. It supposes that a person must know the divine appointment concerning him; that he must, as it were, peruse the eternal rolls of God’s decrees, and read his name in the book of life, before he can have any warrant to apply to Christ for salvation. But this is a grand mistake.—Let me illustrate the point. When food is presented to a person pinched with hunger, would it be wise, would it be rational for him to hesitate about the propriety of using it, because he does not know whether his Maker has appointed that he shall be nourished by it? though at the same time he well remembers, that *man does not*

not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God; and, therefore, without the concurrence of divine providence, supposing he eat it, it will be of no service to him. Would he not rather say; “ Meat was made for the use of man; “ I feel my need of it, I will endeavour to “ use it, as the appointed mean for satisfying my “ craving appetite and supporting my “ animal frame?”—Now Christ is the bread of life and the food of our souls. This heavenly food was provided by grace, is exhibited in the gospel, and freely presented to all who hunger, without any exception†. What, then, in such a case, has the awakened sinner to do, but, as the Lord shall enable him, to take, and eat, and live for ever? It is very evident, that he has no business to enquire about any further right to partake; since it was not *provided* for any, nor can be of *use* to them, under any other character, or considered in any other light, than that of miserable objects who are *starving* for want of food.

Further: According to this doctrine, complete provision is made for the *certain salvation*

* Isa. lv. 1, 2. Matt. xi. 28. John vi. 37.

tion of every sinner, however unworthy or wretched, who feels his want and applies to Christ for relief. The gospel is not preached to sinners, nor are they encouraged to believe in Jesus, under the formal notion of their being *elected*. No: these tidings of heavenly mercy are addressed to sinners, considered as *ready to perish*; and all the blessings of grace are displayed in their view for their immediate relief, as sensible that such are their state and character. While all, without any exception of persons, or any regard to worthiness, who apprehend their danger and feel their want; are invited, in the tenderest manner, to look to the Lord Redeemer, previous to any enquiries about their election, that being a following consideration*.—The order established, in the œconomy of grace, in reference to this affair; is, not that guilty, perishing sinners must *first* prove their election before they are permitted, or have any encouragement, to trust in Jesus for complete deliverance; but, seeing their state, they have all the encouragement which the word of Jehovah can give, without hesitation to rely on the Saviour; and all the assurance which the

* Isa. xlvi. 22. Acts xvi. 30, 31

oath

oath of God can impart, that in so doing they shall obtain, pardon for their sins and peace for their consciences; a freedom from wrath and the enjoyment of glory. These things are evident from the whole tenour of divine revelation; and to conceive otherwise, proceeds on a mistake of the doctrine, and is followed by an abuse of the truth. Consequently, it administers no real occasion of discouragement or fear, to the enquiring soul or the sensible sinner—to none of the human race in whose esteem, a Saviour from the guilt and power of sin would be precious or welcome. And as to such who are dead in sin and unconcerned about their souls, or have an high opinion of their own righteousness; the Redeemer with all his glory, and the gospel with all its blessings, are despised by them, so that they must be out of the question.

But may it not be inferred; “That this doctrine is calculated to countenance spiritual sloth, and encourage licentious practices; in such who conclude, that they are in the number of the favoured few?”—That none who are so persuaded will, in the end, find themselves deceived in their expectations, I will not assert. I dare not, therefore, affirm, that there are no instances of persons

professing to believe the evangelical doctrine, and *pretending* to an interest in the heavenly blessing; who may not abuse the *former*, and fall infinitely short of the *latter*. But this I may boldly affirm, that whoever encourages himself in spiritual sloth, or licentious practices, from such a persuasion, is guilty of a vile abuse of that truth, which, in its own nature, has a directly contrary tendency; and, at the same time, marks himself out as a vessel of eternal wrath, rather than an object of sovereign mercy.

Nor can this objection have any force, except it were proved; That the infinitely wise God has appointed the *end*, but entirely forgotten the *means* which are necessary to attain and enjoy it. A supposition this, highly unworthy of his character, and directly opposite to his express declarations. For though the eternal Sovereign had no respect, in the choice of his people, to any thing in them which was worthy, or to any good works foreseen; yet his professed design in their election was, *that they might be holy, and without blame before him in love**. This being the design of God, respecting his chosen, it would be strange in-

* Eph. i. 4.

deed,

deed, strange to a wonder, if the revelation of his immutable purpose should have a tendency to make them the very reverse, and prove an incentive to their vilest lusts!— Again: It is written, *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation*—how? According to this bold objection, one would suppose it was in such a way, as allowed them larger scope and greater liberty, for gratifying their licentious passions and lawless appetites, than corrupt nature could otherwise have enjoyed or desired—in such a way, as had no respect to the interests of holiness; as made no provision for the honour of God, in a christian conversation. If this could be proved, the doctrine would deserve the utmost abhorrence. But this is far from being the case. For the objects of this gracious purpose, we are expressly informed by the oracle of heaven, were chosen to salvation, **THROUGH SANCTIFICATION OF THE SPIRIT, and belief of the truth***. *Sanctification of the Spirit* may be considered, not only as an appointed and *honourable mean* of attaining the exalted end, the salvation of the soul and the glory of God; but also as an *essential part* of that salva-

* 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 1, 2.

tion to which they were chosen, which is begun on earth and completed in glory. Taken in either view it is sufficiently obvious, that this instructive and important text is a full proof, that the objection alledged is quite impertinent, and entirely void of truth to support it. Consequently, that they who make it are influenced, either by gross ignorance or inveterate prejudice. For from hence it appears, with the brightest evidence, that the holiness and happiness of God's people, are equally secured by the divine purpose and the everlasting covenant.—Besides, such and such only who live by faith on Jesus and walk in the ways of obedience, have any evidence that they *are* the elect of God. In proportion, therefore, as they lose sight of the glorious object of their dependence, and deviate from the paths of holiness, they lose sight of their interest in distinguishing love. So that their inward peace and conscious joy, are greatly concerned in a pious conduct.

Nor is that other objection, so frequently and violently urged, any more to the purpose.

“ If this doctrine be true, say our opponents, “ there is little or no occasion for the *use of* “ *means*, in order to attain salvation. For if “ we be elected, we shall be saved *without* “ them;

“ them; if not, they will prove *abortive*.
“ On such a supposition, all our prayers and
“ tears and strivings; all our circumspection
“ and self-denial will be of no avail. We
“ may, therefore, as well take our ease and
“ rest contented. A profession of religion is
“ an useless thing: for the final event is fixed
“ by a predestinating God, and who shall
“ reverse it?”—This objection agrees with the
former in supposing, that the *end* is decreed
without respect to the *means*. A palpable
fallacy, and pregnant with great absurdities.
Let us apply the principle, on which the ob-
jection proceeds, to the common affairs of life.
—I take it for granted, that there is a super-
intending providence over all human affairs,
over all our minutest concerns. If so, either
the great Ruler of the world from everlasting
determined what he would do, in all that in-
finite variety of circumstances in which any
of his creatures should ever exist, or he did
not. If not, then innumerable millions of *new*
determinations must have arisen in the eternal
Mind since the world began, respecting his
conduct towards his creatures; or he must
have acted without any prior determination
at all, and so without a *plan*; neither of
which corresponds with our ideas of an in-

finitely perfect Agent. If he did, from eternity, determine upon his conduct, and form the extensive plan of his future operations, respecting rational creatures; then, it is evident, the objection lies with equal force against our making use of any means, or exerting any endeavours, in order to obtain any promising advantage, or to avoid any threatening evil, in *common life*, as it does against making use of means in the important concerns of our souls, and in reference to a future world. For it is absurd to suppose, that the divine purpose can be made void, any more in the one case than in the other. According to this way of arguing, trade and commerce, the labours of husbandry and all the employments of life, must be at a stand. For who, among all the busy mortals on earth, can foretel the event, or ascertain success? Who can tell, however promising the prospect, but Jehovah's purposes may render all his contrivances and all his painful industry entirely fruitless? Nay, further, upon this principle, we must not eat our common food, nor seek the needful refreshments of sleep; for it must be confessed, that we are absolutely ignorant what the purposes of God may be, as to the event, in either case. If it be his divine determination that

we

we shall live in health and vigour, what occasion for the one or the other? if not, what good will they do us? For *his purpose shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.*—But who, notwithstanding this, ever took it into his head to adopt the principle and thus apply it to the affairs of the present life? None, surely, but a fool or a madman. While we have our sober senses and reason in exercise, however firmly we may believe the existence of the *eternal decrees*; or however clearly we may discern the *interposition of providence*, in ten thousand different ways; we never suppose that those everlasting purposes, or these providential interpositions, were designed to supersede the use of means, or had any such tendency, as to the concerns of *time*. Why, then, should we strive to separate the end from the means, in things of infinitely greater importance? The dictates of inspiration, the maxims of philosophy, the principles of common sense, and the general conduct of mankind; all unite in utterly disavowing such a procedure, as irrational and absurd to the last degree.

Further: This objection militates no less against the infallible *foreknowledge* of God, than against his *purpose*. This appears from

hence. Jehovah is perfect in knowledge. That knowledge which is absolutely perfect, can admit of no increase. All the volitions, therefore, of moral agents, and all the events consequent upon them, were, from eternity, present to the divine Mind, and open to his omniscient eye. And as all things future were included in his all-comprehending view, before the world began; so it would be absurd to suppose, that any event should ever take place, otherwise than as He foresaw it. With equal reason, therefore, might the objector infer from the divine prescience, that the use of means, to attain any end, is vain, as from the doctrine of predestination. For, between the foreknowledge and the purpose of God, there is a close and inseparable connection.— To illustrate the point, and apply the argument to my present purpose. Allowing the perfect foreknowledge of God, the objector may thus argue against the use of means, respecting his eternal state. “ The foreknowledge of God is perfect. From eternity he viewed my final state. Either he foresaw me seated on a throne of bliss, and exulting in a sense of his favour; or loaded with chains of darkness, and groaning in the agonies of endless despair. As he from

“ eternity

“ eternity viewed me, so it must inevitably
“ be; for perfect foreknowledge is infallible.
“ My eternal state is, therefore, a *fixed point*
“ with the Deity. What need, then, of the
“ use of means, to avoid torment, or ob-
“ tain felicity? Prayer and watchfulness, all
“ the exercises and all the duties of a painful
“ profession, are entirely in vain. If the Om-
“ niscent foresaw me *happy* in a future world,
“ I cannot be miserable. If he foresaw me
“ *miserable*, I shall not, I cannot be happy;
“ though all the angels in heaven, and all
“ the men upon earth, were to afford me
“ their united aid.”

This argument, I humbly apprehend, wears the face of probability to as great a degree, and infers the objection, I am now refuting, with as much propriety and force, as that which is formed and the inference from it, against the decree of election. But the truth is, neither *that* nor *this*, has the least force or propriety. For as Jehovah, when he decreed the *end*, appointed the *means* and the application of them to their respective objects; so, in his eternal prescience, he not only *viewed* the end, but also *foresaw* the means, with their application and use, as connected with the final event. As he foresaw none in the abodes

abodes of darkness, but such whom he viewed as guilty, and walking in the ways of destruction; so he determined to bring none to glory, but in a way becoming himself, as infinitely holy, and by the use of means which grace should render effectual.—Hence it appears, that the objector must either give up his argument, or deny that his Maker is perfect; which to do, is to undeify *the God that is above*. This, indeed, with a bold impiety, many have done; in order to support their favourite notions about *free-agency* and the *liberty of the human will*, in opposition to the doctrine of sovereign grace and divine predestination *: being well aware, that whoever allows the eternal and perfect *fore-knowledge* of God, cannot consistently deny his *decrees*, respecting the final state of men. This the *Socinians* have freely acknowledged.

“ Admitting, say they, *the infallible prescience*
 “ of all future contingencies, *Calvin’s doc-*
 “ *trine of the predestination* of some, by name,
 “ to life, and of others to death, cannot be
 “ refuted †.” They, therefore, do their utmost

* HOORN. *Socin. Confut.* Tom. i. l. 2. c. 3. DR. OWEN’s *Vind. Evang.* Chap. 5. DR. DODDR. *Leet.* p. 99, 100.
 † *Compend. Socin.* c. 4. § 1. apud WITS. *OEcon. Cov.* l. 3. c. 4. § 12.

endeavour to prove (horrid to think!) that He who formed and governs the universe, is not possessed of such a foresight; in other words, that he is not God. And this they do, by much the same arguments used by others, in opposition to the doctrine here maintained.

To the foregoing objections some, perhaps, may be ready, with an air of confidence, to add; “ Does not this doctrine, in its inseparable connections, represent the Most High, as *partial* in his conduct towards his creatures, and as a *respecter of persons*? as dealing *hardly*, if not *unjustly*, with the far greater part of mankind?”—In answer to which I observe; That as to the charge of *partiality* and *respect of persons*, here exhibited against the divine conduct, on supposition of the truth of the doctrine espoused, it is entirely void of the least foundation. For wherever such a charge may be advanced with propriety, against the conduct of any one, it must be in the affairs of *remunerative*, or *punishing justice*, and where the rules of equity are more or less transgressed; but cannot possibly have place in matters of *sovereign favour* and *mere bounty*, of which kind is election, whether

whether we consider it as an act of God, or as a blessing bestowed on his creatures.—For instance: If we consider a person, in the capacity of a *magistrate*, as invested with the executive power of the criminal laws of his country, and behold him inflicting the penalties annexed to their respective crimes, upon such offenders as are poor, and mean, and of little account in the world; while he suffers others of nobler birth, more elevated rank and affluent circumstances, to escape with impunity; we have great reason to remonstrate against such a procedure, as a culpable *partiality*, a criminal *respect* of persons, and as no other than a *perversion* of justice. But, if we consider the same person under the character of a *benefactor*, and behold him dispensing his favours among his indigent neighbours and distressed fellow-creatures, in order to relieve their wants and render them happy; we never imagine that he is under any obligation, to shew an *equal regard* to all who may stand in need. And supposing he distribute his bounty in the greatest variety, to the favoured objects of his beneficence; supposing he load some with favours, while others, who may stand in the same need, are entirely overlooked; shall we arraign his

conduct

conduct as *partial*, or call him a *respecter of persons*? By no means. And the reason is, we here view him as having a right, *to do what he will with his own*. Were not this the case, there would be nothing indecent, if, after he had manifested his beneficent regards to some, others were to come with a commanding voice, and *require* his assistance in the same way and to the same degree; than which, nothing would be more bold and impertinent.

Besides, if Jehovah must be denominated a *respecter of persons*, and his conduct pronounced *partial*, on supposition that he loved and chose some to everlasting happiness, while he rejected others and left them to perish under his righteous curse; if the *equity* of his proceedings, in the affairs of grace, must be called in question, because he bestows eternal blessings on some, and entirely withholds them from others; how shall we vindicate the methods of providence, in ~~ten~~ thousand different instances? Does He not, as to the concerns of *religion*, afford those means of grace, his word and ordinances, to some, while they are entirely withheld from others? And, where they are enjoyed, does he not regenerate and sanctify some, by the

Spirit

Spirit of truth, while others, who have the same external means, continue in spiritual darkness and finally perish? If, then, the uncontrollable God may do that in *time* for some, which he is not under any obligation to do for any; none can doubt whether he might, from *eternity*, form such a resolution: nor is divine providence any thing else, but the *execution* of God's eternal purposes.—Similar to this, is the conduct of the all-wise God towards mankind, as to temporal things. For nothing is more evident, than that the supreme Governour of the world, is liberal in communicating enjoyments of every kind to some; while others, not more unworthy, are all their lives subject to the greatest distresses. And though there is so vast a disparity between *temporal* and *eternal* blessings; yet, if to distinguish between his creatures, in bestowing or with-holding the *latter*, would any way impeach his character; it must, in proportion, do so in the *former*. For the Judge of all the earth must do right. And as none can, without open blasphemy, quarrel with the sovereign dispensations of providence, on account of that difference which subsists between one man and another, in the present life; so none ought

to indulge a captious humour, in finding fault with the methods of grace, because their Maker does not manifest an equal regard to all.

Nor can it be inferred from any thing asserted or implied in this doctrine, that God deals *hardly*, much less *unjustly*, with any part of mankind. Here let me ask the objector, and let him ask his own conscience; Have all mankind sinned? Is sin a transgression of the divine law? Is the law they have broken, righteous; just in its requirements, and equitable in its sanction? If so, every man is guilty before God, and every mouth ought to be stopped: for all have deserved to die; to perish; to be destroyed with an utter destruction. Either these things are acknowledged as undoubted truths, or the authority of the Bible is rejected, and divine revelation denied. These truths being admitted, reason itself must allow, that if all mankind had perished under the curse, the honour of their Maker, as the supreme governour and righteous judge, must have been unimpeachable. And if so, it is impossible to conceive, how his *choosing some* to life and happiness, and his *rejecting others*, can afford the least occasion for the charge suggested in the objection.

jection. For the election of those whom God determined to save, does not *injure* the non-elect. Their situation would not have been at all the better, if none had been chosen, nor any saved. For non-election is not a *punishment*; it is only the with-holding of a free favour, which the sovereign Lord of all may bestow on whomsoever he pleases.

When the whole world is considered as *guilty before God*, we must allow, that he had an unlimited right to determine about the final state of men, just as he pleased. He was at perfect liberty to determine, whether he would save any or no. He might have left all to perish, or he might have decreed the salvation of all. Or, he might purpose to save some, and reject others: and, so determining, he might love and save, he might condemn and destroy, whom he pleased. Surely, then, it cannot be absurd in reason, or inconsistent with the divine character, to suppose that he *actually has* chosen some to infinite glory, and determined to punish others with everlasting torment.—To acknowledge that all have sinned against God, forfeited his favour, and deserve to perish; and at the same time to suppose, that he might not leave what number he pleased to condemnation and wrath;

wrath, imply a contradiction. For they who might not be rejected, whether more or fewer, must have a claim on Jehovah's favour; consequently, not justly liable to perish, which is contrary to the supposition.

It is eternally meet that God should order all these things according to his own pleasure. His infinite greatness, majesty and glory, certainly entitle him to act as an uncontrollable Sovereign, and that his will should in all things take place. He is worthy, supremely worthy, that he should make his own glory the end of all that he does; and that he should make nothing but the dictates of his own wisdom, and the determinations of his own will, his rule in pursuing that end; without asking leave or counsel of any of his creatures, and without giving *an account of any of his matters*. It is perfectly agreeable, that He who is infinitely wise and absolutely perfect, should order all things according to his own will; even things of the greatest importance, such as the complete salvation, or the eternal damnation, of sinners. It is right that He should thus be sovereign, because he is the first, the eternal Being, and the fountain of existence. He is the Creator of all things, and they are absolutely

lutely and universally dependent upon him; it is, therefore, entirely consistent with his character, that he should act as the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

Further: If this objection were founded in truth, God could not exercise mercy in his own right; nor would the blessings of his grace be his own to give. That which he may not dispose of as he pleases, is not his own. If not his own, he cannot make a gift or present of it to any of his creatures, they having a *claim* upon it; for it is absurd to talk of *giving* to any one, that to which he had a right in equity.—But what would this objection make of God? Must the High and Lofty One be so tied up in the exercise of his grace, that he must not use and manifest it at his own pleasure, in bestowing his gifts; but, if he dispense them to one, must be obliged to give them to another, or be obnoxious to the charge of *partiality* and *cruelty*? Shocking to think! the very thought is blasphemy. This impious imagination arises, absurd as it is, from the *high opinion* we form of ourselves, and the *diminutive thoughts* we entertain of our Maker*.

* MR. JONAT. EDWARDS's *Disc. on Imp. Sub.* p. 203, 204. Ed. *Boft.*

But

But why should the objector be so much concerned about the honour of divine justice, in the conduct of God towards *mankind*, on supposition that he has chosen some and rejected others? Why should he not be as much concerned, lest the glory of his Maker should suffer a stain, by the final rejection and eternal damnation of all the *angels* that sinned and fell from their first estate? Certainly, there is equal, if not superior, reason. Why does he not, then, plead the cause of those old apostates, those damned spirits, and quarrel with God because he has shewn more regard to fallen men than fallen angels? yet he is under no pain on their account; nor so much as once suspects, that the divine character will lose any part of its glory, because they are *all*, without one exception, the objects of Jehovah's eternal vengeance.—But, very likely, he concludes, that *they deserve* to be damned. True: and do not men? If not—how shall I speak it?—the *law* of God is unrighteous, for it denounces damnation as the desert of sin; the *death* of Christ was an unnecessary and shocking event; the *capital parts* of the Bible, unworthy of the least regard; and the *distinguishing doctrines* of Christianity, no better than a dream, a fable—a gross imposition on

all who believe them. Without admitting this fundamental truth, that men, considered as sinners, *deserve to perish for ever*; we can behold neither *equity* in the law, nor *grace* in the gospel. The eternal rectitude of the great Lawgiver, and the amiable glories of the wonderful Saviour, are quite obscured; while the whole œconomy of redemption, as revealed in the scripture, is thrown into the utmost confusion. Consequently, the objector has no alternative, but either to give up his point, or blaspheme his Maker.

The truth maintained may now be considered, by way of improvement, as it respects the *careless sinner* and the *real christian*.—As it respects the *careless sinner*. Is this your character, reader? If so, it is happily adapted to strike your conscience and alarm your fears; to arouse your lethargic soul, and awaken your enquiries about eternal things. You have seen that it is a righteous thing with God, to execute vengeance on all who are guilty; and, that if he had left all mankind to perish, none would have had a right to complain. And though he has, of his mere grace, chosen a number of the fallen race and determined to bring them to glory; yet

yet millions are left to suffer the awful desert of their crimes. How, then, do you know, but this may be your case? Remember, thoughtless mortal! that if you be rejected of God, you are lost for ever. And are you still unconcerned about your soul? then you are a condemned creature. The sentence of a broken law, and the wrath of an awful Judge, abide upon you. You are in the hands of an offended God, and, shocking to think! you are at a dreadful uncertainty, what he will do with you.—It may be, you are sometimes afraid what will become of you; afraid lest you should have your portion in the lake, which burns with fire and brimstone. And, be it known to you, that while you are habitually careless about your eternal interests, and a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God, you have *reason* to fear. Your apprehensions of eternal vengeance, are too well grounded: you have reason to tremble every moment. But you will do well to remember, that though you be ever so much afraid of the final event; though everlasting damnation be ever so dreadful, yet it is what you have justly deserved. Your injured Maker and affronted Sovereign may inflict it upon

you, and be righteous, and holy, and glorious in it. However dreadful it now is, in your apprehensions; or however intolerable it would be in the execution, on your part as a criminal; neither the one nor the other can render it the less righteous, on the part of God.—You should remember, sinner, that your Maker sustains the character, of a universal sovereign and righteous judge. His honour, therefore, is deeply concerned in punishing the guilty. And though damnation be worse than the loss of being, yet you can have no right to complain of injustice, except you could form a perfect estimate of what degree of guilt attends innumerable acts of rebellion, against unlimited authority, infinite majesty, and boundless perfection; and, upon a just comparison of the degree of guilt, with the intenseness and duration of the punishment, pronounce them unequal. But who can tell to what an enormous height, the guilt of one single act of rebellion against infinite Majesty must arise, in the boundless empire of God? We may boldly affirm, that none but the Omnipotent; none but He who is possessed of that peerless majesty, can solve the question. Meditate on these

these awful truths ; and may the Lord enable you to *flee from the wrath to come* *.

Does my reader profess to believe and embrace this divine truth ? Has he tasted that the Lord is gracious, and is he a *real christian* ? This doctrine informs him, from whence his happiness flows, and to whom the glory is due. By it he is taught, that Grace is an *absolute sovereign* ; that she dispenses her favours to whomsoever she pleases, without being subject to the least control. Here she appears, maintaining her rights and asserting her honours, with a grandeur becoming herself. Yes, reader, this doctrine presents you with **GRACE ON THE THRONE** ; while, like an herald, with a friendly importunity and commanding voice, it cries in your ear ; **BOW THE KNEE !**—And as this doctrine pre-

* From hence it appears, that as the doctrine of God's *general* and *equal* love to mankind, and the sentiment of *universal* redemption, are too evidently calculated to lull the conscience asleep, under a false presumption and delusive hope, of interest in the Redeemer and happiness by him, where there are no evidences of regeneration, nor any proofs of love to God and his ways : so the doctrine of eternal, *distinguishing* grace, and of the Mediator's *substitution* in the stead of the chosen seed, have an obvious tendency, to alarm the careless sinner, and awaken the drowsy formalist.

sents you with a view of grace, in its sovereign glory; so it points out the objects of eternal love, as in a state of the utmost security. For, *who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* To know your interest, therefore, in the election of grace, is a matter of great importance. And that such a knowledge is attainable, is evident from that exhortation of the Holy Ghost: *Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure; sure to your own mind, and satisfactory to your own conscience.* And that such a persuasion, grounded on truth, is intimately connected with a christian's peace and joy, is beyond a doubt. Nor is there any other difficulty in attaining the certainty, than what attends an undoubted persuasion of our being *called by grace.* Whoever has a right to conclude, that he is *called* by the gospel and converted to Christ; may, from the very same premises, infer his *election.* For none but those who were chosen to life and happiness, are born of God, or believe in Jesus.—If, then, you espouse the doctrine, you should not be satisfied with merely avowing the sentiment, as an article of your belief; but should consider it as a truth according to godliness, and seek for the advantages resulting from it. For you will find it of

little

little avail another day, that you adopted the sentiment into your theological system; if you have never experienced any benefit from it, in a way of humility and love, consolation and joy. Viewed in such a connection with experimental religion, you should meditate on it: considered as thus important, you should endeavour to vindicate it from the hateful charges of the sons of pride.

Again: Are you, on divine authority, not only convinced that the doctrine is *true*, but also persuaded of your *interest* in the love it reveals? remember, then the exalted *privileges* to which you are chosen. Chosen you are, to a participation of grace, with all its immense donations; to the fruition of glory, with all its eternal felicity. *Regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, and perseverance* in the faith; these, christian, with all that *inconceivable bliss* which results from the enjoyment of God himself, are the blessings designed for you in the decree of election. Surely, then, with such blessings in hand, and such prospects in view, it is but reasonable that you should be entirely devoted to God, and live his obedient servant. If gratitude have any persuasive energy, if love have any constraining influence; here they should operate

operate with all their force. Henceforth the glory of God and the honour of that adorable Person, by whose mediation you come to enjoy these wonderful favours, should be your main concern and the end of all your actions.

—Remember also, the honourable *character* conferred upon you in the sacred writings. Among those names of distinction which the people of God bear, that of *the elect*, is none of the least remarkable. Of this character the Spirit of wisdom reminds believers, when he urges upon them the duties to which they are called. *Ye are a chosen generation, a peculiar people.* Would we know to what end they were chosen, and why they are a people distinguished from others, as God's peculiar property? the following words inform us. *That ye should shew forth the praises of Him, who, as a fruit of his electing love, hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light* †. Here is the christian's duty in general, and to perform it should be his constant busines: for he was *chosen in Christ, that he might be holy and without blame before him in love.*

Or, is my reader one of those to whom the remark would be applicable; “ This man entertains high notions in religion, and pre-

Blind & void credit. 1 Pet. ii. 9.

“ tends

“ tends to *sublime* attainments in knowledge.
“ *Eternal* purposes and *absolute* sovereignty ;
“ *unchangeable* love and *distinguishing* grace ;
“ are his favourite topics. Yet he lives in
“ the *open neglect* of the plainest precepts and
“ the most important duties. While pride
“ and covetousness, wrath and malice, with
“ various other unsanctified tempers, govern
“ his conduct, and render him a scandal to a
“ religious profession.”—The very thought
of such a reflection is grieving to the godly ;
and wo be to that professor, to whom it may
be justly applied ! If this be your case, your
state is awful indeed. You may dispute, as
long as you please, in vindication of divine
sovereignty, in the affairs of grace ; but it
will all be to little purpose, either to yourself
or others. For it is plain, that you are an
enemy in your heart, and a rebel in your life,
against that infinite Sovereign, whose rights
you pretend to maintain. You virtually de-
ny his absolute authority and renounce his
supreme dominion, by such a neglect of his laws.
Sinful appetites are the law you obey, and
carnal pleasure the end you pursue ; while
your Maker and Lord has neither the affec-
tion of your heart, nor the service of your
hands.

hands. May that omnipotent, sovereign grace, of which you talk without any experience, deliver and save your wretched soul! For, verily, it would be hard to find a more shocking character out of hell.

C H A P. IV.

Of Grace, as it reigns in our Calling.

WE have seen, in the preceding chapter, that grace presided in the eternal counsels, and reigned, as an absolute sovereign, in the decree of *election*. Let us now consider the same glorious grace, as exerting its benign influence, in the regeneration and *effectual Calling* of all who shall ever be saved. — *Election* makes no alteration in the real state of its objects. For as they were considered, in that gracious purpose, in a sinful, dying condition; so they continue in that situation, till the power of the Holy Spirit and the energy of omnipotent grace, reach their hearts. The *means* being decreed as well as the *end*, it is absolutely necessary, in order to accomplish the great design of *election*; that all the chosen, in their several generations, should be born of the Spirit and converted to Jesus; called of God and bear his image.

That important change which takes place in the mind and views of a sinner, when converted to Christ, is frequently signified in the infallible word, by being *called of God*; *called*

by

by grace ; called by the gospel †. In performing this work of heavenly mercy, the eternal Spirit is the grand agent, and the divine word is the honoured instrument.—Are men, in a natural state, considered as *asleep* in sin, and *dead* to God? when they are called, their minds are enlightened and spiritual life is communicated. The Spirit of God, speaking to the conscience by the truth, quickens the dead sinner; shews him his awful state, and alarms his fears. *I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live. The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. Awake thou that sleepest.*—Are they considered as having *departed* from God and at a *distance* from him; in the way of destruction, yet afraid to return? then the language of the gospel is; *Return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.* Such a revelation of grace being made in the gospel; such invitations being addressed to apostate, perishing sinners; the Spirit of truth, in effectual calling, gives them encouragement from these declarations to return to God, and enables

† 1 Cor. i. 9. Gal. i. 15. 2 Thess. ii. 14.

them

them to look for life and expect salvation, from the hand of Him against whom they have sinned, and from whom they have so deeply revolted. Such, in a general view, is the nature of that heavenly blessing, which is the subject of our present enquiry.

That any sinner is *called out of darkness into marvellous light*, is entirely owing to divine grace. *God called me by his grace*, says the apostle*; nor do any of the saints ascribe their conversion to any other cause.—Man, being by nature dead in sin, unacquainted with its evil, and elated with a fond conceit of his own abilities; looks upon his offences against God, rather as pitiable failings than shocking crimes. He extenuates his faults, and overrates his duties. He depreciates the work of Jesus, and places his dependence on his own supposed good performances. Being entirely ignorant of his own moral weakness, the total corruption of his nature, and the extensive demands of the divine law; he endeavours, if he has any concern at all about his soul, to establish his own righteousness, as the principal ground of his acceptance with the high and holy God. He trusts in some

* Gal. i. 15.

general mercy, to be exercised towards him through Jesus Christ, to make up the deficiencies attending his own sincere and well-meant attempts to perform his duty. And, in case of a relapse into open and scandalous sins, he flatters himself with the hopes of pardon, and of having an interest in the love of God; if he does but forsake his past transgressions, be sorry for them, and amend his ways for the future. This, he thinks, is the obvious and easy way, of placating an offended God, and obtaining the divine favour. On such a sandy foundation are the hopes of the generality built. Thus we lie, asleep in sin and dreaming of happiness; on the verge of a dreadful precipice, yet unapprehensive of danger; till reigning grace exert its influence, to recover us from our native ruin.

But, when the spirit of God convinces of sin by the holy law, and manifests its extensive demands to the conscience of a sinner; when he is informed that every sin, subjects the offender to a dreadful curse; then his fears are alarmed and his endeavours are quickened. Being aroused from his spiritual slumber, he is more earnest and punctual in the performance of religious duties; in endeavours

youſs after holineſſ, and in the purſuit of hap-
pinesſ. He is not content with that careleſſ
and ſuperficial way of performing devotio‐
nal ſervices, which before ſatiſfied his conſcience
and gratified his pride. For now, guilt bur‐
dens his foul, and conſcience ſharpenſ her
ſting; while the terrors of the Almighty ſeem
to be ſet in array againſt him. The *duties*
he has negelecd, the *mercies* he has abuſed,
and the daring acts of *rebellion* he has com‐
miſſed againſt his Maker and Sovereign,
crowd in upon his mind and rack his very
foul. While the justice of the Lawgiver ap‐
pears ready to vindicate the law, as holy and
good; and, like an incenſed adverſary, un‐
ſheathes the ſword and makes a loud demand
for vengeance. In ſuſh a ſituation, he cannot
but earneſtly ſeek to eſcape the impen‐
ding ruin. But yet, his heart being deeply leavened with
legal pride, and unacquainted with the di‐
vine righteouſneſſ; he labours to obtain ſalvation,
as it were, by the works of the law.—When,
by the Spirit and word of truth, he is further
made ſenſible of his natural depravity, and
of the deſeſts attending his beſt per‐
formances; when he conſiders how very im‐
per‐
fect they all appear in his own eye, and that
a perfect righteouſneſſ is abſolutely neceſſary

to his acceptance with the eternal Judge; then his hopes of salvation by his own obedience vanish, and his apprehensions of divine vengeance increase. Thus, *when the law comes*, shining in its purity and operating on his conscience with power, *sin is revived*; a sense of deserved wrath possesses his soul, and his former self-righteous hopes expire.

He now reflects on his past ignorance and pharisaical pride, with the greatest amazement and the deepest self-abhorrence. However reluctant, he is obliged to give up his former exalted notions of his own moral excellence, and is compelled, with the polluted leper, to cry out; *Unclean! unclean!* Now he perceives a propriety, now he feels an energy, in those emphatical scripture-phrases, which describe the state of a natural man, by a *helpless infant*, grovelling in its blood, and a *filthy sow* wallowing in the mire; by a *dog* in love with his vomit, and an *open sepulchre* emitting the abhorred stench of a putrefying carcase *. These objects, he is fully convinced, are infinitely less offensive to the most delicate person and the keenest sense, than that moral

* Ezek. xvi. 5, 6. 2 Pet. ii. 22. Rom. iii. 13. Mat. xxiii. 27.

pollution is, which has defiled his whole soul, in the sight of an holy God.—Now he freely acknowledges, that what he used to look upon as trivial offences, are *shocking* crimes. He is thoroughly convinced that the various transgressions of his life, however vile and enormous, are so many streams from a corrupt and bitter fountain within ; that they proceed from a *desperately wicked heart* †. He is amazed, he is confounded, when he reflects upon his inbred corruptions, and views his native depravity. His eyes being opened to behold the spirituality and vast extent of the divine law, he considers his whole life as one continued scene of iniquity. For, instead of living, every moment of his time, in the uninterrupted and most fervent love of God, as his law requires ; he finds, to his grief and shame, that he has lived in the love of *self* and *sin* : self-love having been all his law ; self-pleasing all his end.—Viewing the holy law, as a transcript of the divine purity, he plainly sees that he is no less obliged to love God with all the powers of his soul, for the sake of his infinite excellencies ; than he is to avoid the horrid crimes of murder and adultery. In a word, he considers himself as the *chief*

† Jer. xvii. 9 Mark vii. 21, 22.

of sinners. The sentence of the law, though terrible to the last degree, he allows to be just. The execution of it he cannot but dread; yet, from his heart, he acquits both the law and the Lawgiver, of any the least unrighteous severity, though he should never taste of mercy. His language is; “ The law “ is *just* and *death* is my due.”

Methinks I behold the awakened sinner, sobbing with anguish and bathed in tears; fixed in thought and indulging reflection, about his state and his danger.—“ The law, “ how holy, which I have transgressed! the “ curse, how awful, which I have incurred! “ My crimes, how numerous! their aggra-“ vations, how dreadful! How ineffably “ wretched my state! for my soul, my im-“ mortal *all*, is in the utmost jeopardy.— “ What shall I do? whither shall I flee for “ refuge? Shall I look for relief to carnal “ enjoyments and sinful pleasures; shall I “ quaff the sparkling bowl, or frequent the “ gay circles of polite amusement? Such a “ procedure would enhance my guilt and en-“ crease my torment; would be like seeking “ an asylum in hell.—Shall I plead, with “ my Sovereign and Judge, that I have not “ been so wicked as others? But how shall “ I prove

“ I prove the fact? or if I could, the debtor
“ that owes but *fifty pence*, having nothing
“ to pay, is equally obnoxious to an arrest
“ and a prison, with one that owes *five hundred*
“ *dred*. For Jehovah declares, *Cursed is every*
“ *one that continueth not in ALL THINGS,*
“ *which are written in the book of the law to*
“ *do them*.—But have I performed *no* good
“ works nor *any* obedience, from which I
“ may extract some comfort, on which I
“ may build my hopes of acceptance? Here,
“ alas, I am entirely destitute. Conscious I
“ am, that I have not loved God, that I have
“ not sought his glory; and without these
“ there is no acceptable obedience. My
“ very prayers need an atonement, and my
“ tears want washing.—Shall I promise
“ amendment and vow reformation, if He,
“ to whom I have forfeited my life, will be
“ pleased to spare it? Shall I say, with him
“ in the parable that owed ten thousand ta-
“ lents; *Have patience with me, and I will*
“ *pay thee all*? This would be an evidence
“ of superlative pride, and an instance of
“ the greatest folly. My debt, like his, is
“ enormous and inconceivably great. And
“ would my Creditor compound for the
“ *widow's two mites*, I should still be ab-

“ solutely insolvent. I now find, by experience, that I am utterly without strength.

“ —But supposing I possessed abilities, and were to perform a perfect obedience, in future; this would make no amends for my past transgressions: the old and heavy score would still stand against me. Had my offences been committed against a fellow-creature, I might possibly have been able to make compensation. But they are against my Maker; to whom I owe my time and talents; all that I have and all that I am. *If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him;* or how shall the offender atone for his crimes?

“ It is the infinite JEHOVAH, against whom I have sinned: it is the eternal Sovereign of all worlds, against whom I have rebelled. Who, then, shall intreat for me?

“ Yes, I have trampled on infinite authority. The language of my stubborn heart and abominable conduct has been; *Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?* As the universal Governour, I have renounced his dominion, and seated self on the throne; as my constant Benefactor, I have abused his mercies to his dishonour.—Infinitely perfect

“ perfect and supremely amiable, as He is in
“ himself, I have neither loved nor adored
“ him: I have treated him as though he de-
“ served neither affection nor reverence. I
“ have, shocking impiety! I have preferred
“ the vilest lusts and the gratification of the
“ worst of appetites, to his honour and ser-
“ vice.—How have I neglected the divine
“ word and sacred worship? I have treated
“ the Bible as if it were not worthy of a se-
“ rious perusal, and, in so doing, have been
“ a *practical atheist*. The assemblies of the
“ saints, my closet, my conscience, all bear
“ testimony against me, that I have lived, as
“ *without God in the world*. Or, if at any
“ time I have attended religious worship in
“ public or private; how have I mocked my
“ Maker? I have behaved myself in his aw-
“ ful presence, as though he had been a
“ senseless idol; one who neither knew nor
“ cared, how he was worshipped. When
“ I pretended to acknowledge my sins, my
“ confessions froze upon my formal lips: and
“ if I asked for heavenly blessings, it was as
“ though I had little or no necessity for them.
“ With delight and avidity I have pursued
“ transitory pleasures and vicious enjoyments;
“ but, as to the worship of God, I have been

“ ready to cry; *O, what a weariness is it!*
 “ I have said to God, it has been the lan-
 “ guage of my heart and conduct; *Depart from*
 “ *me; for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways.*
 “ *What is the Almighty that I should serve*
 “ *him? and what profit shall I have if I pray to*
 “ *him?** Can I doubt, then, can I question for
 “ a single moment, whether I deserve to *die*,
 “ deserve to be *damned?* **DAMNED!**—dread-
 “ ful punishment! Imagination recoils at the
 “ thought. The idea chills my blood. Hea-
 “ ven avert the impending, the righteous
 “ vengeance!—But God is just; and justice
 “ requires that sin should not escape with
 “ impunity. Does it not follow, then, that
 “ my eternal misery is inevitable? In what
 “ other way can the rights of the Godhead;
 “ the honour of divine holiness, truth and
 “ justice, be maintained? If no other way
 “ can be found, wretch that I am! I am lost
 “ for ever.” Thus he lies at the foot of so-
 vereign mercy.

As a rebel against the majesty of heaven,
 and conscious that he deserves to perish, he
 lies deep in the dust of self-abasement, and
 low at the footstool of divine grace. But his

* Job, xxi. 14, 15.

ALL being at stake for eternity, and not being sunk into absolute despair, he ventures to address the blessed God. Being well persuaded, that if his request be granted and his person accepted, his soul shall live ; and, that if his suit be rejected and his person abhorred, he can but die. With trembling hands and a throbbing heart ; with down-cast looks and faltering lips, he therefore thus proceeds.

“ Offended Sovereign! I am justly under sentence of death, and if I eternally perish, yet Thou art righteous. My mouth must be stopped: I have no right to complain. But is there nothing in thy revealed character, which may encourage a miserable creature and a guilty criminal, to look for mercy and hope for acceptance? Art not Thou a *compassionate* Saviour, as well as a *just* God? Is not Jesus thine only Son, and hast thou not set him forth, as a *propitiation through faith in his blood*? To Him, therefore, as my only asylum from divine wrath, I would flee. Yet if repulsed, I dare not, I cannot object; for I have no claim on thy mercy. Only if it seem good to Thee to save the vilest of sinners, the most wretched of creatures; if it please Thee to extend infinite mercy to one who

“ deserves

“ deserves infinite misery, and is obliged to
“ condemn himself; the greater will be the
“ glory of thy compassion. However, as a
“ suppliant at the throne of grace; as a
“ perishing sinner who has no hope, but in
“ sovereign mercy and the blood of the cross;
“ I am resolved to wait, till freely received or
“ absolutely rejected. If rejected, I must bear
“ it as my just desert; if accepted, boundless
“ grace shall have the glory *.” Thus the name

and

* Let none of my readers imagine, that the process of conviction here described, is designed as a *standard* for their experience; or that I would limit the Holy One of *Israel*, to the *same way* and *manner* of working on the minds of sinners, when he brings them to know themselves, their state and their danger. I have no such intention: being well aware that God is a sovereign, and acts as he pleases in this, as in all other things. For though every sinner must feel his want, before he will either seek, or accept relief, from the hand of grace; yet the Lord has various ways to make his people willing in the day of his power. Some he enlightens in a more *gradual* way, and draws them to Christ by *gentler* means, as it were with the cords of love. While he strikes conviction into the minds of others, as with a voice in *thunder*, and *sudden* as a *flash* of lightening. They are brought to the very brink of despair, and shook, as it were, over the bottomless pit. Nor have we any business to enquire into the reasons of this difference in the divine conduct. As the Lord *saves* whom he will, so he may bring them to the *knowledge* of his salvation,

and the work of Jesus forbid despair, and shed a beam of hope on his benighted and disconsolate soul.

One would imagine, that the gospel of *reigning grace*; the tidings of a *free* Saviour and *full* salvation; would be embraced with the utmost readiness, by a sinner thus convinced. One would suppose, that so soon as he heard the divine report, he could not forbear crying out, in a transport of joy; “*This* is the Saviour I want! *This* salvation is every way suitable to my condition. *Perfect* in itself and *free* for the unworthy sinner. Wonderful truth! astonishing grace! “What could I have, what can I desire more? “Here I will rest; in this I will glory.”— But, alas! this is not always the case. Observation and experience prove, that the awakened sinner is frequently backward, exceed-

vation, in what way and by what means he pleases.—If any one doubt, whether his convictions be *genuine*; let him remember, that the questions he should ask himself, in order to attain satisfaction, are not; “How *long* did I lie under them? To what a *degree of terror* did they proceed? “By *what means* were they wrought?” But, “Does it stand true in my conscience, that I have sinned and *deserve* to perish? And is it fact, that nothing but *grace*, the *grace* of a God can relieve me?” These are the questions which demand his notice, and a suitable answer resolves the query.

ing

ing backward, to receive comfort from the glorious gospel. This arises, not from any defect in the grace it reveals, or the salvation it brings; not because the sinner is under any necessity, or in any distress, for which it has not provided complete relief; but because he does not behold the *glory* of that grace which reigns triumphant in it, and the *design* of God in making such a provision. He wants to find himself some way *distinguished*, as a proper object of mercy, by holy tempers and sanctified affections. This is a bar ~~to~~ his comfort: this is his grand embarrassment. In other words, he is ready to fear, that he is not *sufficiently humbled* under a sense of his sins; that he has not a *suitable abhorrence* of them; or, that he has not those *fervent breathings* after Christ and holiness, which he ought to have, before he can be warranted to look for salvation with a well-grounded hope of success.—Thus the sinner, even when his conscience is oppressed with guilt and earnestly desirous of salvation; opposes the true grace of God, by hankering after some worthiness of his own. From whence it appears, that the genuine self-denial of the gospel, is the hardest sacrifice to human pride.

But

But grace reigns. The Spirit of truth, a principal part of whose busines it is, in the œconomy of salvation, to testify of Christ and of sovereign mercy by him; still calls the poor alarmed wretch, by the gospel. Evidencing to his conscience, not only the *all-sufficiency*, but also the absolute *freeness*, of the glorious Redeemer. Manifesting, that there are *no* good qualities to be obtained; *no* righteous acts to be performed, either to gain an interest in him, or qualify for him. Shewing, yet further, that legal convictions and a sense of want, are not to be accounted *conditions* of our acceptance with Christ and salvation by him; nor ought they to be esteemed previously necessary to our believing on him, on any other account, than as a *sensibility* of our spiritual poverty and wretchedness, renders a supply, in a way of grace, truly *welcome*. These are needful, not as inclining God to *give*, but as disposing us to *receive*. A sinner will neither seek nor accept the great atonement, till sensible that divine wrath and the damnation of hell, are what he deserves; and what, without the propitiation of the adorable Jesus, he must unavoidably suffer.

I take it for granted, that we must come to Jesus under that character by which he *calls* us.

us. But it is evident, he calls us by the name of *sinners*. As sinners, therefore, *miserable, ruined* sinners, we must come to him for life and salvation. The gospel of peace is preached to such, and them the gospel calls; even such who are not conscious that they are the subjects of the *least* good disposition. Yes, disconsolate sinner, be it known to you, be it never forgotten by you; That the gospel with all its blessings, that Christ with all his fulness; are a glorious provision made by the great Sovereign and by grace as reigning, *only* for the guilty and wretched.—For such as have *nothing* of their own, on which to rely; and utterly despair of ever being able to *do* any thing for that purpose. The undertaking of Jesus was intended for the relief of such as are ungodly, altogether miserable, and without hope in themselves. Such was the beneficent design of God, and such is the salutary genius of the gospel.—Delightful, ravishing truth! enough, one would think, to make the brow of melancholy wear a smile. Let me indulge the pleasing thought, and once more express the charming idea. The blessings of grace were never designed, to distinguish the worthy, or reward merit; but to relieve the wretched and save the desperate.

perate. These—hear and rejoice!—these are, “the patentees in the heavenly grant.” Yea, they have an *exclusive* right. For as to all such, who imagine themselves to be the *better sort* of people; who depend on their own duties, and plead their own worthiness; who are not willing to stand on a level with publicans and harlots; Christ has nothing to do with them, nor the gospel any thing to say to them*. As they are too proud to live upon alms, or to be beholden, *entirely* beholden, to sovereign grace for all their salvation; so they must not take it amiss, if they have not the least assistance from that quarter. They appeal to the law, and by it they must stand or fall.

He, therefore, who believes in Jesus, relies on him as the *justifier of the ungodly*. Nor does he consider himself in any other light, or as bearing any other character, in that very moment when he first believes on him; if he did, he could not believe on him as the *justifier* of such. The only encouragement the sinner has to apply to Christ for all that he wants, consists—not in a consciousness of

* Matt. ix. 12, 13. Luke xviii. 9—14. Matt. xxi. 31. Rom. iii. 9—20.

being

being possessed of any pious disposition, of having come up to terms, performed any conditions, or being any way different from what he was before—but, in that grace which reigns and is proclaimed in the gospel. Yes; the free declarations of the gospel, concerning the Saviour, contain a sufficient warrant for the vilest sinner, in the most desperate circumstances, to look for relief at the hand of Jesus. Such as, *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The Son of man is come to seek and to save, that which was lost. Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out. Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

In these, as in many other similar passages of holy writ, the sinner is encouraged to look to the Lord Redeemer, with assurance that, in so doing, he shall not be disappointed—to look to Him, not as one whose character and state are different from those of the world in common; but as a guilty creature and ready to perish. These free declarations are founded on the glorious undertaking and finished work

work of Christ: who suffered for the unjust; who died for men, while sinners and ungodly; and who reconciled them to God, when they were enemies. So that *all things are ready*, for the sinner's enjoyment and happiness; here, in a life of faith and holiness; hereafter, in the fruition of glory.—These divine testimonies, are only a specimen of what might be produced on the occasion. And they, together with others of the same import, are the proper ground of our faith in Christ, or dependence on him, for everlasting salvation.

Hence it appears, that the sinner who is effectually called of God, is not led by the Holy Spirit to believe in a dying Redeemer, under a persuasion of his being now distinguished from his ungodly neighbours and former self; or, in other words, of his being a much better man than he was before, in virtue of any good habits or qualities; nor does his comfort arise from any such supposed alteration. No: the divine Spirit does not bear witness to our spirits, concerning our own inherent excellencies; or inform us how much we are superior to others: but, concerning the all-sufficiency, suitableness, and absolute freeness of Christ, and of all the blessings included in his mediation. And the

basis of the believer's hope, and source of his spiritual joy, are—not a consciousness that he has *done* something towards his own salvation, call it *believing*, or what you will—but, the *truth* he believes and the *Saviour* on whom he relies: which truth, possessed in the heart, is also the spring of his holiness.

The sinner being brought, under the influences of the blessed Spirit, and by the instrumentality of the gospel; to renounce every false confidence and legal hope, and, as to acceptance with the Most High, to pour contempt on every righteousness which is not in all respects perfect; *leans* on Christ, as the rock of ages; *cleaves* to him, as the only hope of the guilty; and *rejoices* in him, as *able to save to the uttermost*, all, without exception, *who come to God by him*.—Now a new scene of things opens to his view. He beholds, with amazement, how God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. The just God and the Saviour, appear in the same point of light. Now the everlasting covenant unveils its infinite stores to his ravished sight, and the gospel pours its healing balm into his wounded conscience. Jesus and his righteousness, are now his only hope. He finds a sufficiency in the glorious Immanuel, not only

only to supply all his wants; but to make him infinitely rich and eternally happy, and in him he rests completely satisfied. He who, but a little before, stood trembling and confounded at the tribunal of conscience; who could scarcely imagine, that God would be righteous if he did not pour out his vengeance upon him; finds the work of the heavenly Substitute, a full vindication of the rights of justice, and an everlasting foundation for his strongest confidence. This wonderful expedient, so well adapted to glorify God and save the sinner; he beholds with astonishment, and contemplates with rapture. Yes, beholding *Grace on the throne*, he bows, adores, and rejoices. Gratitude abounds in his heart, and praise flows from his lips.

When he reflects on his present unworthiness and former state, beholding what enmity he cherished in his bosom against his Maker; when he considers how carnal his affections, how stubborn his will, how proud his heart; how often he had, in his conduct, adopted the language of those who say to the Almighty, *Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*; he is amazed that he was not long since transmitted to hell. When he further considers, how loth he was to bow to

divine sovereignty, and submit to heavenly mercy ; how long he resisted the calls of providence, and stifled the remonstrances of conscience ; and, that if less than an infinite Agent had been employed in reducing an obstinate rebel to obedience, he had been finally obdurate and eternally miserable—when he thus reflects, he is filled with a pleasing astonishment. On a comparison between what his sins have deserved and what God has bestowed, he cannot forbear exclaiming ; “ What “ hath God wrought ! what a miracle of “ mercy !” He is convinced, to a demonstration, that his *Calling* is to be ascribed to *grace*, *reigning grace* alone. He is fully persuaded that God was the first mover in this, as well as in every other blessing bestowed ; in every other benefit enjoyed, or promised. When he meditates upon his calling, his language is ; “ I am *found* of Him, whom I neither “ loved nor sought. He is *manifested* to me, “ after whom I did not enquire.” He will say, “ I am *known* of God ; I am *apprehended* “ of Christ :” rather than, “ I *know* God, I “ *apprehend* Christ †.”

† Luke xv. 4, 5. Rom. x. 20. Gal. iv. 9. Philip. iii. 12.

Thus

Thus to be called of God, is an instance of reigning grace, and an evidence of eternal, distinguishing love*. Happy are you, reader, if you know, by experience, what it is to be called by grace. If such be your state, it becomes your duty and busines, to *walk worthy of your calling*: for it is *high, holy, heavenly* ‡. Yes, believer, your calling is truly noble. You are *called out of darkness*, gross darkness, *into marvellous light*; and out of worse than *Egyptian* bondage, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. You are called out of the world, and from communion with the wicked and unregenerate; into the most intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesu Christ. Called you are, out of a state of open rebellion against God, and painful anxiety of mind, into a state of reconciliation and friendship; conscious peace and heavenly joy. What shall I say? You are called from the slavery of sin, to the practice of holiness; into a state of grace here, and to the enjoyment of glory hereafter||. In short, it is the *High*

* Jer. xxxi. 3. ‡ Philip. iii. 14. 2 Tim. i. 9.
Heb. iii. 1. || 1 Pet. ii. 9. Gal. v. 13. 1 Cor. i.
9. and vii. 15. Col. iii. 15. 1 Thess. iv. 7. 1 Pet. i.
15. Gal. i. 6. 1 Thess. ii. 12. 1 Pet. v. 10.

God that called you ; it is the *way of holiness*, in which you are called to walk ; and it is the *unfading inheritance*, the *eternal kingdom*, you are called to enjoy. Here is your blessedness, and here is your duty. The consideration of these things, as a noble incentive to obedience, should fire your mind with godly zeal ; should fill your heart with christian gratitude ; should direct your feet in the paths of duty, and manifest its constraining influence through your whole conduct.

And you who are *uncalled*, alas, how awful your state ! If you leave the world in such a situation, you are lost for ever ; you die to eternity. For none shall be *glorified* hereafter, but such who are *called* here. If death should summons you hence, before you are converted to Christ, what will become of you ? as dry stubble you must fall into the hands of Him, who is *a consuming fire*.—You may entirely neglect the concerns of your soul ; you may, for a season, trifle with the affairs of religion, and hear the gospel with a careless indifference ; but, if grace should not interpose for your rescue, dreadful will be the issue. The word of God and the gospel of Christ, will be a swift witness against you another day ; will be *the savour of death unto death*

death to your soul; while God, even God himself, will be your eternal enemy. Consider this, *ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver**.—If you attend on a preached gospel and frequent the house of God, do not take it for granted that you must needs be a christian, because you make a public profession, and yield a cool assent to the truth. This thousands have done, this you may do, and yet perish for ever. If not divorced from the law, if not renewed in your mind and enabled to believe in Jesus, as a miserable helpless sinner; it will, in the event be found, that you have only chosen a more *decent*, though less frequented path, to the regions of darkness; and that you are damned with the single advantage, of having left a respectable character behind you among your fellow-sinners. A poor compensation this, for the loss of an immortal soul, and an awful issue of a religious profession! God grant that it may not be the case with my reader! —Nor let any one mistake a set of *evangelical notions*, received by education or imbibed under a gospel ministry, for *true conversion* and *faith* in the great Redeemer. A mistake here

* Pf. I. 22.

is fatal, and has been the ruin of multitudes. A professor may be wise in doctrinals, and able to vindicate the truth against its opposers; while his heart, far from being right with God, is entirely carnal; cold as ice, and barren as a rock. *Though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and have not charity; love to God and love to his people, I am nothing.* Vain, then, are the pretensions of all such, whatever knowledge they may have of the gospel, who live in sin; who love not God, nor seek his glory. They may shine in religious conversation; they may display their talents and feed their vanity, by defending truth and refuting error; and, conscious of superior abilities, may look down with a solemn pride on persons of meaner parts and less understanding in the doctrines of grace; but their superior knowledge will only aggravate their future wo, and render damnation itself more dreadful.

C H A P. V.

Of Grace, as it reigns, in a full, free, and everlasting Pardon.

PARDON of sin, is a blessing of superlative worth, being absolutely necessary to present peace and future salvation. Without it, no individual of *Adam's* race can be happy. When the conscience of a sinner is wounded with a sense of guilt, and oppressed with fears of divine wrath, it is sought with ardour, as the most desirable thing; it is received with joy, as the first of favours.

But, great and necessary as the favour is, had it not been for that revelation contained in the Bible, mankind would have lain under a sad uncertainty, whether there was any such thing as *forgiveness with God*. Being conscious of guilt, yet partial in their own favour, they might have pleased themselves with conjectures, that he would not condemn and destroy *all* his offending creatures; but they could never have arrived at certainty. For, by whatever mediums they might have come to the knowledge of a Deity, as the great

great Author of nature and sovereign Ruler of the world ; by the same means they must have known, that perfection was essential to the divine character, and, consequently, infinitely opposite to moral evil. But whether such as had rebelled against him might be forgiven, consistent with his perfections and purposes, and without impeaching his honour, as a righteous governour; this, unassisted reason, could not have determined.—But, adored be the condescension and goodness of God ! we are not left to grope in the dark, and to form a thousand wild conjectures, about an affair of such vast importance. We have a revelation, a divine revelation, of the richest grace and tendereſt mercy. From which we learn, with absolute certainty, that *there is forgiveness with our Maker and Sovereign.* This revelation of mercy is of great antiquity, and almost coeval with time itself. It was known to the patriarchs ; it was revived and exhibited, in a fuller, clearer manner, under the *mosaic* œconomy. But, by the incarnation and work of the Son of God ; by the commencement of the gospel-dispensation, and the spread of the Redeemer's interest ; it has received the highest confirmation, and shines in all its glory.—Jehovah's pardoning

pardoning goodness, was loudly proclaimed to *Moses*, and makes a conspicuous figure in that sacred name, by which the God of *Israel* was known to the church in the wilderness. *And the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed THE NAME OF THE LORD. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed; THE LORD, THE LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, FORGIVING INIQUITY, TRANSGRESSION AND SIN*†. Yes, to the eternal Sovereign, *belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him**.

This capital blessing of the new covenant, is represented in the book of God, by many strong metaphors, and in a rich variety of language; yet all in exact correspondence, to the different views which are there given, of the dreadful nature and complicated evil of sin.—Is the sinner represented, as all over *defiled* and *loathsome* with the most hateful impurity? then his pardon is signified, by the *perfect cleansing* of his person and the *covering* of all his filth ‡. Is he compared to an *in-*

† Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6, 7.

* Dan. ix. 9.

‡ Ps. xiv. 3. xxxii. 1. and lxxxv. 2. 1 John i. 7.
Rev. i. 5.

solvent debtor, and his offences to a debt of *ten thousand talents*? then his pardon is described by a *blotting out* of the debt, or by a *non-imputation* of it*. Is he likened to a person who labours under the weight of an *heavy burden*, which galls his shoulders and sinks his spirits? then his forgiveness is designed by a *lifting up*, and a removal of the pressing incumbrance†. Are his transgressions, for their nature, number and effects, represented by *clouds*; black, lowering, low-hung clouds, which are ready to burst in a storm and deluge the country? then his pardon is signified, by their *total abolition*, by *blotting them out* from the face of the heavens, so that the least trace of them shall not remain, nor any mortal be able to tell what is become of them ‡. Is sin pronounced *rebellion* against the Majesty of heaven, and the sinner considered as a *convict*, just going to be executed? then forgiveness is a *reversing the sentence*, and a *remission of the penalty* due to his crimes. Under such a consideration, which is the proper notion of pardon, the lan-

* Ps. xxxii. 2. and li. 1, 9. Matt. xviii. 24. † Ps. xxxviii. 4. and xxxii. 1. Matt. xi. 28. ‡ Isa. xliv. 22.

guage of a gracious God, is; *Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom**. The Lord is pleased to represent the same invaluable blessing, by *casting our sins behind his back*; by *casting them into the depths of the sea*; by *removing them as far from us, as the east is from the west*; by *remembering them no more*; and by making *scarlet and crimson offences, white as wool, yea whiter than snow*†.

In this forgiveness grace *reigns*, and the *riches of grace* are displayed. It is an *absolutely perfect pardon*; and to make it so, *three things* are required. It must be *full, free, and everlasting*. That is, it must extend to *all sin*; it must be *vouchsafed without any conditions*, to be performed by the sinner; and *absolutely irreversible*. But these things deserve a more particular consideration.

That forgiveness which is equal to the wants of a sinner, must be *full*; including all *sins*, be they ever so numerous; extending to all their *aggravations*, be they ever so enormous. Every sin being a transgression of

* Job xxxiii. 24. † Isa. xxxviii. 17. Micah vii.
19. Ps. ciii. 12. Heb. viii. 12. Isa. i. 18. Ps. li. 7.
Lam. iv. 7.

the divine law, and every transgression subjecting the offender to a dreadful curse ; it is plain, that if the guilt attending every sin be not removed, if the penalty due to every sin be not remitted ; the curse must fall upon us and wrath must be our portion. Hence appears the necessity of a *full* pardon in order to happiness.—And as it is essentially necessary, so it is granted. The scriptures declare, abundantly declare, that when our offended Sovereign pardons any of the human race, he forgives *all* their sins. For thus says the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts : *I will cleanse them from ALL their iniquities whereby they have sinned against me ; and I will pardon ALL their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me* *. Charming declaration ! To forgive sin, is a divine prerogative. None can dispense the unspeakable favour but God. This he declares he will do. And that he will not only forgive some sins, or a few, but *all* ; *all entirely*.

Let us hear another ambassador from the court of heaven. The prophet *Micah*, with an air of thanksgiving and joy, declares ; *He will*

* Jer. xxxiii. 8.

turn again, *He will have compassion upon us, He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast ALL their sins into the depths of the sea**. *He will turn again*; not as an incensed adversary, to pour out his vengeance; but as a friend and a father to manifest his grace. Beholding with pity, our miserable condition and helpless circumstances, *He will have compassion upon us*; He will relieve our distresses and richly supply our various wants. And as sin is the cause of all our misery, and that abominable thing which he hates, *He will subdue our stubborn iniquities*; he will remove their guilt by atoning blood, and destroy their dominion by victorious grace. *And*, as a further expression of thy pardoning love, though thy people have offended to ever so high a degree; *Thou wilt cast*, not a few, or the greater part only, but *ALL their sins into the depths of the sea*. Their sins, as a burden too heavy for them to bear, as an object too hateful for Thee to behold; thou wilt for ever remove from them, for ever cast out of thy sight. Here the *fulness* and the *perpetuity* of divine forgiveness, are expressed with all the force of language.—Another infallible

* Micah vii. 19.

writer, and mirror of pardoning mercy, expresses the glorious truth and celebrates the ineffable blessing, in the language of exultation. To hear his *words*, is delightful; to partake in his *joy*, is transporting. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name—Who forgiveth ALL thine iniquities, who healeth ALL thy diseases* †. Such is his language, and such the ground of his triumphant, his exuberant joy. And a solid foundation it is for incessant thanksgiving. For when, and to whomsoever God pardons sin; he so forgives it, that, as to the eye of his vindictive justice, he *sees it no more*, there is *none to be found*; there is none which *can be charged* upon them ‡. And hence it is, that there is *no condemnation* to such persons §.

This forgiveness is worthy of God. This forgiveness, flowing from grace, reaches the foulest crimes and the most abominable transgressions. In virtue of it, scarlet and crimson sins are made *white as wool*; yea, *whiter than snow**. The bloody sins of *Manasseh*; the madness of rage in a persecuting *Saul*;

† Ps. ciii. 1, 3. ‡ Numb. xxiii. 21. Jer. 1: 20.
Rom. viii. 33. § Rom. viii. 1. * Isa. i. 18. Ps.
li. 7.

the bitter taunts of the *Thief* against the Son of God, when both were in their expiring moments, and the sin of *crucifying* the Lord of glory; these, *all* these, with all their various and horrid aggravations, have been pardoned. These, though inconceivably heinous, and some of them such as the sun never beheld, either before or since, have been forgiven by a gracious God. The blood of Christ is possessed of an infinite energy, arising from the superlative dignity of him who shed it, and is able to *cleanse from all sin*. From each sin, be it ever so *heinous*; from all sins, be they ever so *numerous*.—Thus grace, like a mighty and compassionate monarch, passes an act of oblivion on millions and millions of the most aggravated offences and complicated crimes.

Did the most abandoned profligates know, what forgiveness there is with God; they would no longer be held by the devil under that injurious persuasion, and destructive snare; “There is no hope.” Nor would they form the rash conclusion; “We have loved strangers, and after them will we go.”—JEHOVAH is the God of pardons. This is his name and this is his glory. For thus saith the Lord;

* Jer. ii. 25.

† Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Neh. ix. 17.

*I will pardon all their iniquities—and it shall be to me a NAME OF JOY, A PRAISE, AND AN HONOUR, before all the nations of the earth, and all the angels in heaven; which shall hear of all the good, the superlative good, that I do unto them**. Astonishing words! The Sovereign of all worlds seems to glory in his pardoning mercy, as one of the brightest jewels in his own eternal crown. This is encouraging: this is delightful. Well might the church cry out in a transport of joy; *Who is a God like unto thee? that pardoneth iniquity of the most complicated and shocking kind; and passeth by, with the utmost readiness and the greatest alacrity, the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, against his offending creatures: and the glorious reason is, a reason which ought never to be forgotten; because he DELIGHTETH, infinitely and for ever delighteth, in shewing mercy to the most unworthy, distressed and miserable*†.

Come, then, poor trembling sinner! though you are conscious that the number and magnitude of your sins are inexpressibly great; come let us reason together, and contemplate

* Jer. xxxiii. 8, 9.

† Mic. vii. 18.

the riches of grace. What, though you are, by nature, an apostate creature and a child of wrath; though you have, by innumerable transgressions, violated the divine law and incurred its everlasting curse—Though you are grown hoary in rebellion against your Maker and Sovereign, and look upon yourself as a monster of iniquity—Though your sins of heart, lip and life; sins of omission and sins of commission; sins of ignorance and sins against knowledge; like an armed host, in terrible array, besiege you on every side, and call aloud for vengeance on your guilty head—Though, to heighten your misery and increase your grief, the enemy of mankind should come in like a flood, and load you with horrid accusations; should tell you that you have, by your sins, dared God's vengeance to his very face, and solemnly mocked him in your duties; and so set a keener edge on all your sensations of guilt—And, to complete your distress, though your own conscience should turn evidence against you, ratify the dreadful verdict, and pronounce the deserved sentence; so that you are ready to conclude, you are almost a damned soul, and that *your* case is absolutely desperate; yet still there is relief to be had. Notwithstanding all these

deplorable circumstances, there is no reason you should sink in despair. For, behold! there is forgiveness, a *full* forgiveness with God; and, such is his mercy, *he waits to be gracious* in bestowing the invaluable blessing. As he never confers the favour, on account of any thing amiable in the object; so he never with-holds it, on account of any peculiar aggravations in the sinner's conduct or character. To dispute this, is to deny that salvation is by grace. Divine mercy is not conditional, narrow, or limited; not like that which is exercised by men, backward to interpose, till something inviting appear in its object. No; it is absolutely free and divinely sovereign.

Consider, O disconsolate soul! how many millions now inhabit the regions of immortal purity and exult in bliss, who were once, loath-some with sin and laden with guilt; oppressed with fears and ready to sink in despair; in a word, altogether as abominable and wretched as you can possibly be. Reflect a moment, and see whether you cannot find, among those *spirits of the just made perfect*; such who were, by *nature* the same, and, before mercy was shewed, no better by *practice* than you.— There you will find, that adept in every kind of wickedness, the idolatrous and bloody *Masseh*†.

nasseb †. There you may see the perfidious *Peter*; the man who, contrary to light and knowledge; contrary to the warnings of his Master, and his own most solemn protestations; denied his Lord and Saviour, who was then going to spill his very blood for him, with bitter *oaths* and *curſes**. There you may behold many of the profligate *Corinthians*; persons who were once a reproach to their country, and a scandal to human nature. While, near to the Son of God and seated on thrones of bliss, you cannot but observe, many of those *Jerusalem*-sinners, who imbrued their hands in the blood of the Lord of glory. These make a distinguished figure among the shining hosts; the very thought of which, must revive the heart of the drooping sinner. In a word, there you will see, sinners of every sort and of every size. So that, be your sins like a debt of millions of talents; be they more in number than the stars in the firmament, and heavier than the sand of the sea; yet this *full* forgiveness superabounds. Let this be your rest and this your joy, that grace reigns in the pardon of *all sin*.

† 2 Kings xxi. 2 Chron. xxxiii.

* Mark xiv. 71.

The next requisite in a complete pardon, is, that it be *free*; or in other words, not vouchsafed on any *conditions* to be performed by the sinner.—In respect to Christ the *surety*, the pardon of any, even the least transgression, was suspended on the performance of the most dreadful condition and the hardest terms. The terms, the condition were, his incarnation, his most perfect obedience to the divine law, and subjection to the most infamous and accursed death of the cross. As to Jesus, *blood* was the rigorous condition; *blood* was the dreadful demand; even the pouring out *his own blood*, was the righteous requirement of the law and justice of God. For *without shedding of blood*, even the blood of the Prince of life and Lord of glory, *there is no remission* of any offences. The atonement of our glorious Highpriest is that alone, which satisfies the claims of justice; which procures the pardon of sin, and pacifies the consciences of men, when pained with a sense of guilt.

This forgiveness is, notwithstanding, *absolutely free* to the pardoned sinner. It is dispensed according to the riches of divine mercy, and is received in a way of grace. As it is written, *We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the*

*the riches of his grace†. The death of Christ and the glory of God; that as the meritorious cause, and this as the ultimate end; are what Jehovah has in view when he bestows the blessing. God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. I, even I am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake.—*The last passage is so remarkably apposite to my present purpose, that I cannot forbear transcribing it more at large. Thus runs the sacred text: *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.* After such an *heavy* charge; rather, after such a *complication* of charges exhibited against them; who could expect but the next words would flash vengeance, and denounce utter destruction? But lo!—rejoice, O ye heavens! and

Eph. i. 7.

K 4

shout

shout for joy, O ye children of men!—every syllable is balm, every word teems with consolation. JEHOVAH speaks—let the worst of sinners attend and hear! *I, even I*, whom thou hast so notoriously offended, *am he that blotteth out thy transgressions*; not because thou art humble, or any way qualified for my mercy, but *for mine own sake*; to demonstrate the riches of my grace, and display the glory of all my eternal perfections. *And this is fully and effectually, that I will not remember thy sins any more*†.—Here we have the apostle's declaration finely exemplified; *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*. In the instance before us we behold a people, highly favoured of the Lord, neglecting his positive appointments, though easy to be performed; we behold them *restraining prayer before God*, and quite tired of his worship. Yea, we hear their Sovereign complain, that they have caused him to serve with their sins, and wearied him with their multiplied crimes; and yet these impious, atheistical wretches are pardoned. Amazing mercy! “*Sin abounds like a flood, but grace abounds like an ocean*.” If a pardon thus circumstanced, be not abso-

† Isa. xliii. 22—25.

lutely free, on the part of the criminal; I think it would puzzle the most fruitful invention, to contrive a form of words to express any such thing.

The Spirit of inspiration, speaking by the same prophet, in another place, says; *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him; I bid me and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.* What expedient does the Lord try next? One would naturally expect, that since these milder methods did not reclaim the obstinate, rebellious, covetous wretches; he would proceed immediately to lay on severer strokes, and make them feel the vengeance of his lifted arm. But reigning grace does wonders; such wonders, as will fill heaven with hallelujahs to all eternity. *I have seen his ways*, says the Lord. Surely, then, he will teach them not to offend any more, by inflicting an awful punishment, and making them signal examples of his avenging justice? Such would be the determination and conduct of men, in dealing with a stubborn, yet impotent adversary. But Jehovah's methods of reclaiming offenders and softening the hearts of his hardened enemies, are not like ours; they are, in a peculiar manner, his

own,

own, and highly becoming himself. He adds; amazingly gracious indeed!—he adds, *And will heal him* of these his inveterate maladies. *I will pardon all his offences, and lead him also* in the ways of abedietice. *And,* having shewn him the infinite evil of his former conduct, and possessed his heart of godly sorrow; *I will restore comforts unto him, and to all his mourners**.—A gloriously free pardon indeed! Here grace, reigning grace, takes the rebels in hand. And what is the consequence? Why, their spiritual diseases are healed; their crying sins are pardoned; the sons of Belial are reduced to obedience, and made partakers of heavenly joy.

Let us now consider some few of those eminent and everlasting monuments of grace, as it reigns in the free pardon of sin, which stand recorded in the New Testament.—*Saul*, afterwards called *Paul*, was a barbarous persecutor of the dear children of God. The sacred historian informs us, that his rancorous heart *breathed out threatenings and slaughter*, against the saints of the Most High. Had it been in his power, he would have dealt about death and destruction among the christians,

* Isa. lvii. 17, 18.

by every breath he drew.—Would you see a further description of his malice and rage, against the peaceful and holy disciples of the blessed Jesus? Would you behold this tyger in human form, pursuing and devouring the innocent lambs of Christ, to the utmost extent of his power? then read the following words. *I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme. And, being EXCEEDINGLY MAD against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities**. Is it possible for words to express a more diabolical temper, or a more savage barbarity? What had the objects of his implacable fury done, that he was so highly incensed against them? The grand offence was, they loved Jesus and owned him for the true Messiah. For this he stirred up all his rage, and would not suffer them to live. He might well acknowledge, when he came to his right mind; *I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious.*—Yet this man; than whom, none can be greater enemies to God, none more vile or unworthy; this *butcher* of the members of Christ, obtained mercy. On a sudden, when his thoughts were big with slaughter, and his heart thirst-

* Acts ix. 1. and xxvi. 11.

ing

ing for blood; when he was aiming, if possible, to extirpate the christian name, and cause the remembrance of a crucified Messiah to cease from the earth; then, even *then* was the time, that the persecuted Saviour chose to manifest his love to him. He was called by grace, struck with conviction, pardoned and justified, and became an heir of eternal salvation. Nor was he required to perform any condition, as in the least intitling to these blessings, or qualifying for them. Is it recorded of him, that he was *exceedingly mad* against the christians? his own pen has informed us, that the grace of the Lord was *exceeding abundant* towards him*. So that, though *sin abounded*, *grace did much more abound*.

But some, perhaps, may be inclined to think, that the grace exercised towards *Paul* was as *extraordinary*, as the means of his conversion were *miraculous*.—Let the apostle himself determine the case. He says, *For this cause I obtained mercy, that*—what? That I might appear as a *singular* instance of divine mercy? that I might enjoy a favour, not vouchsafed to any of my *fellow-sinners*? No;

* 1 Tim. i. 14.

but

but that in me first, Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, FOR A PATTERN to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting †. Hence it is plain, that the long-suffering and grace, which were manifested in the pardon and salvation of *Saul* the persecutor, are to be considered; not as a particular instance of sovereign bounty, rarely, if ever to be repeated; but as the very *exemplar* of what should be shewed to millions and millions of transgressors in succeeding ages: even to all who should afterward believe on Christ to life eternal *.

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† 1 Tim. i. 16. Eph. ii. 6, 7.

* That lively, elegant, and evangelical writer, HERVEY; when treating on the conversion of *Paul*, expresses himself in the following manner. “ Observe this man in his unconverted state. He breathes out threatenings and slaughter against the christians. Can any thing denote a more iniquitous and savage temper? The roaring lion and the ranging bear, are gentle creatures, compared with this monster in human shape.—Still the description of his barbarity heightens. *I was exceedingly mad against them; I compelled them to blaspheme; and punished them in every synagogue.* The practice, not of a man, but of a fiend! ’Tis the very picture of an incarnate devil.—What has this infernal wretch, that may recommend him to the divine favour? If ever there was a sinner on earth, that had sinned beyond the reach of

mercy,

The instances of *Zaccheus* the publican,
the *Samaritan Woman*, and the *Philippian*
Jailer,

“ mercy, beyond the possibility of pardon, surely it must
“ be this *Saul of Tarsus*.

“ But the divine mercy, disdaining all limits, is over-
“ flowing and unmeasurable. Where sin has abounded
“ like a flood, divine mercy abounds like an ocean. The
“ favour of man is backward to interpose till something
“ amiable and inviting appears in the object. But the
“ grace of God is immensely rich and infinitely free. It
“ prevents the most vile and hardened rebels. It brings
“ every requisite and recommendation, in its own un-
“ speakably beneficent nature. It accomplishes all its
“ blessed ends, not by any towardly disposition in the sin-
“ ner, but by that one glorious righteousness provided in
“ the Saviour.—This overtook the persecutor on his jour-
“ ney to *Damascus*. Light and life were poured upon
“ him, not from any dawn of reformation in himself, but
“ from a very different quarter. By opening, as it were,
“ a window in heaven, while he was sojourning even in
“ the suburbs of hell. *He saw that JUST ONE*. He re-
“ ceived the inestimable gift. He was made partaker of
“ the salvation, which is in Jesus Christ.

“ See, now, what an effect this faith has upon his con-
“ duct. It causes a total revolution in the sentiments of his
“ mind. It gives a new bias to every faculty of his soul.
“ It introduces an absolute change into the whole tenour
“ of his behaviour. As great and marvellous a change,
“ as if you should behold some mighty torrent, turned by
“ the shock of an earthquake; and rolling those waters
“ to the east, which, from the beginning of time, had
“ flowed incessantly to the west. He adores that Jesus,
“ whom

Jailer, loudly attest the glorious truth for which I am pleading.—*Zaccheus* was chief among the publicans, and, it is highly probable, was not the least among the extortioners. Among his neighbours, his *employment* was detestable, his *character* profligate, and his *company* scandalous. That his employment was *detestable*, none can doubt. That his character was *profligate*, appears from hence. The office of *chief among the publicans*, was what no son of *Abraham*, who had not lost his reputation; no *Jew*, who was not of an abandoned, shameless character, would undertake. And that his company was esteemed *scandalous*, is evident from that severe reflection which was made on the conduct of *Jesus*, when he deigned to become a guest at his table. *They murmured saying, that he was gone to be guest with a man, that is a sinner*; a worthless, infamous fellow. A complaint of the same kind, with that of *Simon the pharisee*: *This man, if he were a prophet*

“ whom he lately blasphemed. He preaches that faith,
“ which he once destroyed. And he is ready to lay down
“ his life for those believers, whom, not long ago, he
“ persecuted unto death.” *Ther. and Afp.* vol. iii. p. 233,
234. edit. 5th.

pbet,

phet; would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner; a person of ill fame, one that is a reproach to her sex *.—But, notwithstanding the unworthy character or conduct of this jewish publican, he is called and instantaneously converted. No course of duties, prior to his believing on Christ, is assigned him. No qualifications, as predisposing for pardon, mentioned. *This day, without any previous preparation, is salvation come to this house.* And before our Lord expressed these gracious words, *Zaccheus made haste—came down from the tree—and received him joyfully.* Now as things were then circumstanced, in reference to the entertaining of Christ; it is not at all probable that he should receive him *joyfully*, without believing in him; nor could that be without receiving the remission of sins. This, therefore, is a noble instance of an absolutely free and unconditional pardon.

Again: The conversion of the *Samaritan Woman* †, is an instance much to our purpose.—This Woman lived in ignorance of the true God and his-worship, and in the vile

* Luke xix. 7. and vii. 39.

† John iv.

practice of fornication, till, by a remarkably gracious providence, she met with our Lord. He made himself known to her. She believed on him; confessed her faith in him; and, consequently, received that forgiveness which is by him. Nor can we suppose, without offering violence to reason and scripture, that Jesus considered her as having come up to any terms, or performed any conditions whatever, as qualifying for that pardon and those blessings which were vouchsafed to her.

Further: The conversion of the *Philippian Jailer*, is equally apposite and equally strong in proof of our point.—The Jailer was a gentle idolater, a barbarous persecutor, and, in purpose, a self-murderer. Yet, being awakened in his conscience, he was directed by an infallible guide, to *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ* immediately; with the strongest assurance that, in so doing, he *should be saved* ‡.—Had *Paul* and *Silas* thought of any predisposing or qualifying conditions, to be attained in any way, or performed by any means; had they thought the exercise of repentance, a course of humiliation for sin, or the evi-

‡ *Acts* xvi. 31.

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dences of any degree of love to God or Christ, previously necessary to pardon and acceptance; no doubt but those ambassadors of Christ, who shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, would have given some intimation of it to the poor trembling querist. But, as they directed him *immediately* to trust in the Saviour, as free for *any*, free for the *vilest* of sinners, without giving him any such intimation; we may conclude, that they did not consider any such thing necessary for that purpose. And as their judgment and conduct, in these important affairs, are acknowledged to have been according to the mind of God; we may assert, that there is no good disposition, no holiness, nor any fruits of sanctification, requisite to the reception of pardon.

I might produce several other instances, from the volume of revelation, to the same purpose; but I shall content myself, at this time, with selecting one. It is that of the *Thief* on the cross. And as his case is so very remarkable, the reader will excuse me if I a little enlarge upon it.—This man died the most ignominious death; a death which was not commonly executed on any offenders, but such as were the very refuse of mankind, and

and guilty of the most atrocious crimes. To this death he was deservedly brought, his own conscience acknowledging the justice of the execution. An hardened villain we find he was, according to the testimony of two evangelists, even after he was fastened to the cross. *Mattew* informs us, *that the THIEVES also, which were crucified with Christ, took up the words of reproach and blasphemy, which were uttered by the chief priests, scribes and elders, against Jesus the Son of God, then dying for the sins of men ; and cast the same in his teeth.* And *Mark* says, *THEY that were crucified with him, reviled him* *. Hence it appears, that they were *both* most obdurate wretches ; that they were *both* guilty of persecuting the dying Saviour, to the utmost of their power, and of blaspheming his offices and work.—This vilest of miscreants, justly suffering for his own crimes, could not be ignorant, that Jesus was nailed to the cross for professing himself to be the Messiah ; nor could he be unacquainted with the meaning of those sarcastic reflections, which were cast upon him by an insolent rabble. Yet he joined the common cry ; he poured out the

* Matt. xxvii. 44. Mark xv. 32.

bitterest reproaches on the most innocent and glorious Person that ever appeared in the world. This he did, when Jesus was in his dying moments, and when his own body was stretched on a cross, transfix'd with nails in the most sensible parts, and racked with exquisite pain. Such a conduct, in such circumstances, evidently discovers, the most astonishing degree of impenitence for his own crimes—the greatest possible abhorrence of the bleeding Immanuel—the highest insensibility of his own state towards God, and unconcernedness about the momentous affairs of an eternal world. He acted as if his tormenting others, were a relaxation of his own pains. From whence could such a conduct proceed? whence indeed, but from the principles of atheism, and the rage of a devil?

Such was the state of the Thief, for some time after he was crucified. Such were the qualifications which he possessed, predisposing for pardon. Yet he, vile as he was,—let reigning grace have the glory!—was pardoned. Being convinced of the superlative dignity of the person of Jesus, as well as the injustice of his condemnation; being informed of the design of his sufferings, and of the nature of that work he was then finishing; when

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the other thief, his companion in wickedness, continued his reproachful language, he rebuked him sharply, and addressed a prayer to the dying Jesus. In which prayer, he acknowledged his Deity ; owned him as Lord of the unseen world ; and as having authority to dispose of crowns and thrones in glory, to whomsoever he pleased. In doing which, he paid him the highest honour which mortal can pay to the true God.—His petition is, *LORD remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom!* Jesus answers him with that majesty and condescension, which alone become the Supreme Possessor of heaven and earth. *Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise*†. The petition of the dying criminal

† How amazing the methods of grace ! How mortifying to human pride is the conduct of Christ ! In the time of his public ministry, he was addressed by a very decent, respectable, and apparently *devout young ruler*. A person who, to outward appearance, was very promising, and likely to be a credit to the Redeemer's rising interest. But, notwithstanding all his recommendations of worldly property and polite literature, honourable character and devout address ; he was sent away *exceeding sorrowful*.—But here we behold the holy Jesus returning the most gracious answer, to the very first petition of an *abandoned malefactor*, a thief, even just before he breathed his last. Consequently,

criminal supposes faith in the illustrious Sufferer, as the all-sufficient Saviour. And, the prayer of faith being that alone which God has engaged to hear, the gracious answer which Jesus returned, irrefragably proves it. His comprehensive petition being readily granted, we may infer, that his sins were pardoned and his person accepted.—Now can it be supposed, that the dying Redeemer, when he vouchsafed pardon to him, considered him in any other light, than that of a *notorious* offender, a most *ungodly* wretch? Is it possible to conceive, with any appearance of reason or scripture, that this Thief performed any intitling or qualifying conditions, previous

he was so far from having any recommendations, either of person or character, that every thing about him was quite the reverse. So true are those words, though spoken with an ill intent; *Behold, a friend of publicans and sinners. The whole have no need of a physician, but they who are sick,* appears to have been the maxim on which the Messiah formed his conduct. And why should the righteous, the self-sufficient, be offended at this? If they can do without the manifestation of such grace, others cannot. But if the elder brother will be displeased, because the prodigal is accepted, who can help it? Such, however, who feel their want and look to the cross alone for relief, will entirely acquiesce in the conduct of Jesus. Being well persuaded, that it is for his eternal honour and their everlasting salvation. Luke xviii. 18—23.

to the mercy and forgiveness which were granted and manifested to him?

Further: Can we imagine that the Thief, when he said *remember me*, could possibly consider himself as any other, than the vilest miscreant? Yet, with great boldness and no less acceptably, he uttered the words.—Nature teaches and pride suggests; “ This is a kind “ of language becoming none, but the dy- “ ing lips of prophets, apostles, martyrs; such “ who have been eminent for good works “ and pious services all their days.” Whence, then, could this infamous man derive such a degree of holy boldness, so acceptable to the bleeding Immanuel? With what confidence, or upon what ground could he say, *remember me*? It is impossible, I should think, for the invention of man to find any *other* reason; nor can all the hosts of angels find a *better*, than that grace which reigns. That grace —let angels and the spirits of the just made perfect, dwell on the charming sound! let the very worst of sinners look to it and rejoice in it!—that grace, which was the only basis of hope for the greatest apostles, and the most holy among the children of men; is an all-sufficient ground of dependence, even for blasphemers and persecutors,

for thieves and murderers ; yea, for the very chief of sinners.

Here we may behold with wonder and contemplate with joy, the conduct of the Lord Redeemer, in making choice of one, as his companion to glory, when he made his exit and left the world. Of one who had—not like *Enoch*, walked with God ; not like *Abraham*, rejoiced to see the day of Christ, and longed for its commencement ; nor like old *Simeon*, waited, with ardent expectation, for the consolation of *Israel*—but of one who, for aught appears to the contrary, had devoted all his time and all his talents, to the service of Satan—of one, whom the sword of civil justice suffered not to live ; and who, in the eye of the public, was less worthy of mercy, than *Barabbas* himself, who was guilty of *sedition and murder* ; was a vile incendiary and a bloody ruffian. Astonishing procedure of the Judge of the world ! Grace, divinely sovereign and infinitely free ! When such a wretch is saved, who can despair ?—At that ever memorable and amazing period, when the Son of the Highest was in the pangs of dissolution, Jehovah was determined to shew, to all succeeding ages, by an incontestable fact ; that the salvation which was then finishing,

nishing, had its source in sovereign mercy; flowed in precious blood; was equal to the wants of the most abominably wicked, and terminated in his own eternal glory, as its ultimate design. This, this is grace indeed! Grace,

“ Not to be thought on, but with *tides* of joy,
“ Not to be mention’d, but with *shouts* of praise.”

Can we cease to admire the *power* of divine grace in the salvation of this Thief? What an amazing difference takes place, in a few hours, as to his character and state? When first extended on the cross, we view him one of the most hardened wretches, whose character is recorded in any history. Then we hear him pray, and behold him a sincere penitent. And lo! before the day is elapsed, his immortal spirit enters the portals of paradise, and is blessed with the beatific vision; even while his body—a deformed spectacle!—still hangs on the gibbet, and declares to all the world that he was not fit to live. Surprising transition! As a nuisance to society and a pest to the public, he is brought to the cross, and from thence is translated to a throne of glory. —Here, also, we behold, in a striking light, the *sovereignty* of grace. For the other thief, though not more unworthy, dies unrelenting and is lost for ever. Here the Almighty shews,

that

that he *will have mercy, on whom he will have mercy*; for *one is taken and the other left.*

I cannot conclude my remarks, on this very extraordinary fact, without observing; That as the death of the Son of God was the most wonderful event, which ever did, or ever will take place, on the theatre of the world; and as it was intended to be a foundation of hope for sinners, in the most desperate cases; so the circumstances attending it were wisely adapted to answer the gracious design in its utmost latitude. The Prince of life was *numbered among transgressors*; was crucified between *two thieves*. He died, not only the most abhorred of deaths, but in the worst of company. Nor was this a *casual* thing: it was determined by Jehovah, and the subject of ancient prophecy. This was graciously ordered, in the purpose and providence of God, to afford relief to the most flagrant offenders.—Had any the least regard been paid to moral character and human excellence, in that most amazing of all transactions; unbelief and pride would soon have concluded, that it was principally intended for the more respectable part of mankind; for those who only want a little assistance, and could do tolerably well without it. On such a supposition, what must have

have become of the awfully guilty and wretched? What but despair, absolute despair, would have awaited the entirely worthless? though these are the very persons in whose salvation mercy delights, and for whose sake the great atonement was provided. Had the companions of Christ on the cross, been persons of a shining character for humanity and piety; yea, had they been the holiest men that ever lived, and of equal repute with *Ezekiel's* worthies, *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job*†; though mankind, by common consent, might have agreed to pronounce their execution an outrageous violation of justice, and execrated the judge who condemned them; yet the dying Jesus would still have been *numbered with transgressors*. But this would have afforded small encouragement to those, who are not only condemned by the divine law, and stand guilty in their own consciences; but have also, by a criminal conduct, incurred the public odium. Such would have been ready to infer, that their case was entirely hopeless; and, that as despair of the future was the most rational thing, so present pleasures, however sinful, would be still more eagerly pursued by them.

† *Ezek. xiv. 14.*

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But grace, reigning grace, was by no means willing, that the most abhorred of men should be reduced to such a dreadful situation. In order, therefore, to prevent this, the Holy One of God was not only *crucified*, to shew that he died under a charge of the highest guilt and was made a curse; but he was crucified between *two convicts* that were thieves and ruffians. He made his exit and was numbered with such, as all the world agree to pronounce *transgressors*, and have ever been esteemed, by all nations, as unworthy to live. And why was this if not to shew, that as the best of men have no solid foundation of hope, but the blood of the cross; so the very worst and the vilest that ever deserved a gibbet, have no reason to sink in despair, while they behold the Lord of life expire in such company; and especially when they remember, that he took one of those villains with him to glory?

My reader, perhaps, would be ready to think it a gross affront to his character, if I were to assert, that he stands on the *very same terms* with this Thief, in respect to acceptance with God; and that the most upright of men have nothing more to plead, before their Maker, than he had. Yet this is a certain truth.

truth. For salvation is entirely by grace. And grace is unconditional favour. Grace, therefore, has no respect to any real or supposed difference among men. All who are relieved by it, are considered as on the same level; the most moral and the most profane, are equally without help and hope in themselves. Whoever, then, looks for salvation by any other grace, or in any other way, than that in which the Thief received it, will meet with a dreadful disappointment.

In the several foregoing instances, grace, in the free pardon of sin, does not only appear, but it appears with majesty; it not only shews itself, but demonstrates its power to be infinitely great and supremely glorious. These remarkable cases stand engrossed by the pen of inspiration, as so many *acts* and *precedents* of the court of heaven; and were recorded for our, yes reader, for *our* observation, instruction and comfort. They were ordered to be transmitted to posterity by the King eternal, *that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, through Christ Jesus.*

The effects also, which were produced on the minds and morals of all these enormous offenders, by the manifestation of grace and a grant of pardon, deserve our

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consideration; as they are a standing testimony to the truth of that saying; *There is forgiveness with Thee, that thou mayest be feared.*—When *Paul* came to experience the power and taste the sweetnes of pardoning grace, no labours were too great for him to undertake; no sufferings were too severe for him to undergo, for the sake of his divine Master. He counted not his very life dear, so that he might propagate the glorious truth and promote his Saviour's honour.—*Zaccheus* was instantly changed in his dispositions and conduct; for the extortioner made restitution, and put on bowels of mercy.—The Woman of *Samaria*, immediately drew numbers to hear that gracious voice, which quickened her own soul; and to receive him as the Christ, by whom she was instructed, pardoned, and comforted.—The *Jailer* manifested a ready obedience to the commands of his Saviour, as king in Zion, by submitting to the ordinance of baptism. He evidenced his love to the despised ministers of the saving truth, by washing the stripes of his two illustrious prisoners, and by treating them, at his hospitable board, with a cordial welcome.—And the *Thief*, the few, the very few moments he had to live, after he enjoyed the blessings of grace;

grace ; confessed his sin, justified God in the punishment he then suffered, and, in love to the soul of his partner in villainy and infamy, reproved him for his blasphemy and warned him of his danger ; the dreadful danger, of losing his soul and suffering eternal wrath.

I am persuaded that the testimonies and facts, already produced and pleaded, in order to prove that pardon is *free* ; detached from all works, dependent on no conditions, to be performed by the sinner, are quite sufficient. Otherwise, I might easily add to their number, by producing other examples and many more declarations, from the sacred volume. But these I omit, and shall only just remind my reader of that very remarkable and truly evangelical text ; *When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son**. — Now as none can deny, that pardon of *sin* is essential to a state of friendship and reconciliation with God ; certainly the reconciliation and forgiveness of those who are *enemies* to him, can never be on account of any thing amiable which they possess, or any thing good which they have done. Such a supposition, if any were absurd enough to make it, would

* Rom. v. 10.

confound the two absolutely contradictory ideas, of *enmity* and *friendship*.

Here let us pause a moment and indulge reflection. Is there no forgiveness of any offender, or the least offence, but by *shedding of blood*; the *infinitely precious* blood of Jesus, the incarnate God? How awfully evil, how inconceivably great, the malignity of sin! The dignity of the Person who suffered for it; the superlative interest he had in his Father's love; and the more than mountainous weight of divine wrath, which he bore in his complicated sufferings; much more strongly express the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the infinite purity of God, than all the everlasting torments of the damned in hell. Here we behold, in the clearest light, that our Sovereign is absolutely just, as well as divinely merciful, in granting a free pardon to the most worthless and guilty. Here are the righteous Judge and the suffering Saviour; inflexible justice and triumphant grace, in the same point of view. The curse is executed in all its rigour, and mercy is manifested in all its riches. Here the Lord of all appears, dispensing innumerable and free pardons; but in such a way, as preserves the ho-
nours

nours of his law inviolate, and maintains the rights of his divine government—In such a way, as is the surprise of angels and the wonder of heaven. To contrive it, was the work of infinite wisdom ; to manifest it, a display of boundless grace. In such a method of dispensing forgiveness, how safely may the alarmed conscience rest ! For, while it is most happily calculated to impress the mind with an awful sense of the infinite evil of sin, the purity of the divine nature, and the extensive demands of the holy law ; it encourages the most unreserved confidence in mercy thus revealed, and cherishes the liveliest hope in grace thus reigning.

Again : Is there a *full* and *free* forgiveness ; a forgiveness vouchsafed without any *terms* or *conditions* to be performed by the enfeebled and corrupted creature ? How shamefully, then, do such persons injure the grace of God, and draw a veil over its most shining excellencies ; who teach or imagine, that pardon of sin is not to be expected, nor can be received, till the sinner is prepared for it by a longer or shorter course of humiliation, self-denial, or holiness of conversation ! This pardon, far from being suspended on conditions to be performed by us ; flows from *sovereign*

grace, is according to the infinite riches of grace, and is intended, by Jehovah, to aggrandize his grace, in the view of all the redeemed and before the angels of light, both here and hereafter.—That *forgiveness which is with God*, is such as becomes the Majesty of heaven; such as is suited to his own infinite excellencies. When the Lord of the world pardons sin, he demonstrates himself to be GOD in so doing; infinitely superior to all his creatures in acts of forgiveness, as well as in every perfection of his nature. For thus it is written; *I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim.* And what is the reason of this divine forbearance? It follows, **FOR I AM GOD, and not man***.—And, in reference to the pardon of sin, Jehovah again declares; *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*†. He freely forgives our ten thousand talents; when, alas, we can scarcely forgive those who are indebted to us, so much as an hundred pence.—Thus the Lord, in be-

* *Hosea xi. 9.*† *Isa. lv. 7, 8, 9.*

stowing a full and free pardon on guilty, perishing creatures; exceeds—the utmost of human deserts? the highest instances of human compassion?—rather, all our expectations and all our thoughts. May a lively sense of this free forgiveness, rest on the mind, comfort the heart, and elevate the affections of my reader! Then shall his conduct declare, that as it is a blessing immensely great, and comes to sinners through atoning blood; so it is connected with true holiness—that it is a strong incentive to *fear the Lord*; to love, adore, and obey him. Then shall he be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are, by *Jesus Christ*, to the glory and praise of God.

Once more: This forgiveness is *everlasting* and irreversible. This is the last and crowning requisite of a complete pardon.—Various passages in sacred writ, evince the glorious truth. Among many others, that charming clause in the new covenant, is not the least remarkable. *I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities WILL I REMEMBER NO MORE**.—This declaration is made by truth itself. This decla-

* Heb. viii. 12.

ration and the blessing signified by it, enter into the very essence of the new, the better, the unchangeable covenant. If, then, He who alone has a power to punish and a right to pardon the criminal, declares that he will *remember his iniquities no more*; we may rest assured, that it is an everlasting forgiveness; a pardon never to be reversed. This declaration, is not simply a *promise*; though a mere promise, from the God of truth, is irrevocable; but it is a promise, in a *covenant-form*—an absolute promise, which faithfulness itself is engaged to make good. The continuance of a pardoned state, not depending on conditions to be performed by the sinner; but on the perpetual efficacy of the atonement of Christ, and the inviolable faithfulness of the eternal God; there is all possible security, that a full and free pardon, once granted, shall ever abide in its full force and in all its glory.

The same comfortable truth, is taught and confirmed by *David*. *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us* *. Hence we infer, that the sins of those who are forgiven, shall never

* Ps. ciii. 12.

come against them to their condemnation ; unless those two opposite points should ever meet, and so cease to be what they are.—Nor can the *blessedness* which the psalmist, in another place, ascribes to the pardoned sinner, be accounted for on any other supposition. *Blessed is he, whose transgression is forgiven.* For if *all* his offences were not forgiven, *all* *entirely*, and that for *ever* ; what peace for his conscience here, what hope of glory hereafter, could he enjoy ? If the continuance of his pardoned state, depended on his own obedience ; if, by a relapse into sin, he would again be liable to condemnation and wrath ; all his present enjoyments and future hopes, would not deserve the name of *blessedness*, the tenure by which they are held, being so precarious. *Precarious ?* I retract the expression. There would be all the certainty, on the opposite side, that could be had ; not the *least probability* in his favour, or the least ground to suppose, that he would ever obtain eternal happiness. And, where the conscience is awake, present peace will always keep pace with an hope of future felicity.

Another inspired penman, thus expresses the joyful truth. *Thou wilt cast all their sins*

into the depths of the sea *. The transgressions of the pardoned sinner are here compared to a stone, or some ponderous thing; which, when cast into the fathomless deep, is absolutely irrecoverable by all the art and power of man. The loftiest towers, the most enormous mountains, with all their cumbrous load of rocks and forests, if cast into the ocean, would all entirely disappear and be lost for ever. By this expressive and striking image, does the Holy Ghost represent the *perpetuity* of that forgiveness which is with God, and is vouchsafed to the believer.—Conformably to which, the Lord says; *The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.* The reason of the assertion is contained in the following words: *For I will pardon them whom I reservest.* A convincing proof, that they who are pardoned by the God of all grace, have all their sins forgiven, and that for ever.—*Isaiah*, the evangelist of the *Jewish* church, has a passage much to our purpose. He represents the Redeemer, the *Holy one of Israel*, addressing his people in the following manner. *As I*

* Micah vii. 19.

† Jer. 1. 20.

have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth ; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee*. Here we have, not only the word, but the *oath* of Jehovah, in attestation to the glorious truth. And if these fail,

“ The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,
“ And earth's foundation stubble.”

But why should I multiply testimonies, when we find the apostle of the *Gentiles*, having this glorious truth full in his view, is bold to challenge every enemy and to defy every danger ? What less can be the import of that heroic language ; *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? Who shall condemn ?* If the blessing of pardon were ever to be reversed ; if a sinner, having been once acquitted from condemnation, should again come under the curse and be liable to perish ; there would be but a slender foundation for such bold and confident expressions.

* Isa. liv. 9, 10.

Such is the nature and such the properties, of divine forgiveness; even of that forgiveness, which is the purchase of Immanuel's pains and the price of redeeming blood. The doctrine of pardon is an essential branch and a capital article of that truth, which is, by way of eminence, called **THE GOSPEL**. For the cheering language of that heavenly message is; *Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this illustrious Jesus, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins*. Such is the import of the evangelical testimony; and the glorious blessing is received by *faith* in the dying Redeemer. *To Him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in Him, shall receive remission of sins**. Believing the infallible record which God has given of his Son, we receive the atonement. The propitiating blood of Jesus is sprinkled on our hearts, pardon is applied to our consciences, and peace enjoyed in our souls.

Nor is it any objection against the truth advanced; That the Lord lays his chastising hand, on the objects of this forgiveness. For though he does afflict and correct them, and

* *Acts x. 43.*

frequently

frequently with some degree of severity, on account of their backslidings, disobedience and ingratitude; yet these chastisements and corrections, are instances and evidences of his paternal affection for them, and constant care over them. And they have the strongest assurances, that he *will never take from them his loving-kindness, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail.*

Nor is it any way inconsistent, with the doctrine maintained; That believers are expressly commanded to pray for the pardon of sin, and that this command has been frequently exemplified in the conduct of the most eminent saints, whose lives and characters are recorded in the holy scriptures. For, to use the words of a learned and judicious author;

“ Very frequently when the saints pray,
“ either for the forgiveness of their own, or
“ others sins; their meaning is, that God
“ would, in a providential way, *deliver* them
“ out of present distress; *remove* his afflicting
“ hand, which lies heavy upon them; or
“ *avert* such judgments which seem to hang
“ over their heads, and very much threaten
“ them; which, when he does, is an indica-
“ tion of his having pardoned them. We
“ are to understand many petitions of *Moses*,
“ *Job*,

“Job, Solomon, and others in this sense*.—
 “Besides, when believers now pray for the
 “pardon of sin, their meaning is—that they
 “might have the *sense*, the *manifestation* and
 “*application* of pardoning grace to their souls.
 “We are not to imagine, that as often as the
 “saints sin, repent, confess their sins, and
 “pray for the forgiveness of them; that God
 “makes and passes new acts of pardon—
 “But, whereas they daily sin against God,
 “grieve his spirit, and wound their own
 “consciences; they have need of the fresh
 “sprinklings of the blood of Jesus, and of
 “renewed manifestations of pardon to their
 “souls; and it is both their duty and their
 “interest to attend the throne of grace on
 “this account †.”

How glorious, then, is that *forgiveness which is with God*, that pardon I have been describing! It has every requisite to make it complete in itself, and suitable for the indigent, miserable sinner. It has not one discouraging circumstance attending it, in the least to forbid the most guilty, the most unworthy, applying to the ever-merciful Jehovah for it.

* Exod. xxxii. 32. Numb. xiv. 19, 20. Job vii. 21.
 1 Kings viii. 30. 34. 36. 39. 50. † Dr. GILL’s two
Discourses on Prayer and Singing, p. 17, 18.

Cheering, charming, ravishing truth! It is *full, free, and everlasting*; every way complete and worthy of God.—It was absolutely necessary to the peace of our consciences and the salvation of our souls, that it should be of such *unlimited* extent, of such *unmerited* freedom, and of such *everlasting* efficacy. Less than this would not have supplied our wants, or served our purpose. If it had not been *full*, taking in every kind and every degree of sin; we must have suffered the vengeance due to some part of it ourselves, and then we had been lost for ever. If it had not been entirely *free*, we could never have enjoyed the inestimable blessing; for we *have* nothing, nor can we *do* any thing to purchase it, or qualify for it. And if it had not been *everlasting*, never to be reversed; we should have been under continual anxiety and painful apprehensions, lest God should recall the blessing when once bestowed, on account of our present unworthiness, or future failings. But, being possessed of these properties, none, no not the vilest, have any reason despondingly to say; “*My sins, alas! are too many and great, for me to expect a pardon.*” None have any cause to complain; “*I long for the blessing, it is dearer to me than all worlds; but my* *strong*

“ Strong corruptions and utter unworthiness,
“ render me incapable of ever enjoying it.”
Nor have any the least occasion to fear, after
the comfortable enjoyment of the superlative
privilege, lest they should forfeit it, and again
come under condemnation and wrath.—*What
shall we then say to these things? Shall we con-
tinue in sin that grace may abound in a perfect
pardon?* God forbid! So to act, would, if
possible, be worse than devilish and more
than damnable. Rather let the pardoned cri-
minal say; yes, he will say, with the warmest
gratitude; *Bless the Lord, O my soul! and
all that is within me, bless his holy name. Who
forgiveth all thine iniquities; who bealeth all
thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from de-
struction; who crowneth thee with loving-kind-
ness and tender mercies.*

Before I conclude this momentous part of
my subject, I would beg leave to transcribe a
few lines from a celebrated author in the last
century; celebrated, not more for his very su-
perior learning, than for his great penetration
in spiritual things, and experience in the chris-
tian life. Treating about divine forgiveness,
he says; “ The *forgiveness* that is with God,
“ is such as becomes him; such as is suitable
“ to his greatness, goodness, and all other
“ excellencies

“ excellencies of his nature; such as that
“ therein he will be *known to be GOD*.
“ What he says concerning some of the
“ works of his providence, *Be still and know*
“ *that I am GOD*; may be much more said
“ concerning this great effect of his grace;
“ *Still yourselves, and know that he is GOD*.
“ It is not like that *narrow, difficult, halving*,
“ and *manacled* forgiveness, that is found
“ amongst men, when any such thing is found
“ amongst them; but it is *full, free, bottom-*
“ *less, boundless, absolute*—such as becomes his
“ nature and excellencies. It is, in a word,
“ *forgiveness that is with God*, and by the
“ exercise of which he will be known so to
“ be.—If there be any pardon with God, it is
“ such as becomes him to give. When he
“ pardons, he will *abundantly pardon*. Go,
“ with your *half-forgiveness, conditional par-*
“ *dons*; with *reserves and limitations* unto the
“ sons of men. It may be, it may become
“ them; it is like themselves. That of God
“ is *absolute and perfect*; before which, our
“ sins are as a cloud before the east wind and
“ the rising sun. Hence he is said to do this
“ work *with his whole heart, and his whole*
“ *soul*; freely, bountifully, largely to indulge
“ and forgive unto us our sins, and to *cast*
“ *them*

" them into the bottom of the sea. Reineft
 " ber this, poor souls, when you are to deal
 " with God in this matter."—Again: " If
 " we let go the free pardon of sin, with-
 " out respect unto *any thing* in those that re-
 " ceive it, we renounce the gospel. Pardon
 " of sin is not merited by *antecedent* duties,
 " but is the strongest obligation unto *future*
 " duties. He that will not receive pardon,
 " unless he can one way or other *deserve* it,
 " or make himself *meet* for it; or pretends
 " to have received it, and finds not himself
 " obliged to universal obedience by it, neither
 " is, nor shall be partaker of it †."

† Dr. OWEN on the 130 Psalm, p. 222, 227. *Exp. Heb.*
 chap. 8. ver. 12.—Here it may be observed, that this emi-
 nent writer *loudly proclaims* the charming truth. He no
 more feared this doctrine leading to licentiousness, than
 he valued the applause of the self-sufficient pharisee, or the
 self-righteous moralist. He treats about a full, free, and
 final forgiveness, like one who knows its real value, expe-
 riences its unutterable sweetness, and glories in it as his
 own privilege. He labours his noble subject, and repeats
 the joyful truth.—Whereas many of our modern preachers,
 who pretend to reverence the Doctor's memory, admire his
 profound learning, and, in a general way, applaud his
 judgment; when handling the same subject, either directly
 contradict him, or whisper the grand truth in *faint ac-
 cents*, as if they questioned the certainty of what they
 would seem to affirm, or were apprehensive of some per-
 nicious consequences attending it.

And

And now, reader, what think you of this glorious pardon? Is it suitable to your wants? Is it worthy of your acceptance? You are, peradventure, one of those *careless mortals* that are at ease in their sins, and eagerly pursuing the tantalizing pleasures of this vain life. And can you be content to live and die in utter ignorance of this forgiveness? Is pardon a blessing of small importance, or have you no occasion for it? Sinned you have, condemned you are, and, without forgiveness, you die to eternity. Start, O start from your trance! Your state is dreadful, though not desperate. Your sins are upon you; the law of God curses you; and you are in extreme danger of eternal damnation. You are tottering, as it were, on the very brink of the most dreadful precipice, and nodding on the verge of the burning lake. Can you sleep in your sins, can you rest in an unpardoned state, when it is all uncertainty, whether the next hour may not transmit you into an eternal world; place you at the bar of God; and put you beyond the possibility of relief? May divine grace forbid that you should continue another moment in such a perilous situation! For, another moment, and your life may be gone; another moment, and your soul may be lost; and

and then your loss will be irreparable, inconceivable, and eternal.

Is my reader *sensible* of his want, and longing for the matchless blessing? Then look to Jesus, the dear, the dying Jesus. Your iniquities, it is true, abound; but pardoning mercy, through his atonement, superabounds. Be of good cheer: take encouragement: for the favour you so earnestly desire, is a *free gift*. And, blessed be God for the amazing mercy! such are the methods of grace, and such is the nature of this *forgiveness*; that as your eternal salvation is bound up in the enjoyment of it, so the everlasting honour of Jehovah is unspeakably advanced by freely bestowing it. There is no reason, therefore, that you should stand at a trembling distance, as if there were no such favour for you; but with boldness you may look for it, in a way of grace through the blood of Jesus, and truth itself has most solemnly declared, that you shall not be disappointed*.

Once more: Are you *acquainted, comfortably* acquainted, with the pardoning goodness of God? having much forgiven, you should love much. The remembrance of a blessing

* Matt. xi. 28. John vi. 37.

so immensely rich, the sense of a favour so extremely high, should enlarge your heart with all holy affections towards the Lord your Redeemer; should animate all your devotional services; should cause you to compassionate your offending brother, in forgiving him his *hundred pence*, considering that God has forgiven you *ten thousand talents*; and make you zealous of every good work. This forgiveness, far from being an incentive to vice, will win over your affections on the side of virtue; will cause you to love God, as infinitely holy, and to abhor sin, as a direct opposition to his immaculate purity and revealed will. Yes, a sense of pardon, when warm on your mind, will work in you godly sorrow for all sin; for the latent corruptions of your heart, no less than the open transgressions of your life; and will cause you to confess them before God with shame and grief *. Such are the genuine effects of divine forgiveness. These fruits will necessarily appear, in some degree. And he who professes to know the pardon of his sins, and does not forgive his offending brother, or walks in the ways, and under the dominion of sin, *is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

* Zech. xii. 10. Ezek. xvi. 63.

C H A P. VI.

Of Grace, as it reigns in our Justification.

THE doctrine of *justification*, makes a very distinguished figure in that religion which is from above, and is a capital article of that *faith*, *which was once delivered to the saints*. Far from being a merely speculative point, it spreads its influence through the whole body of divinity, runs through all christian experience, and operates in every part of practical godliness. The importance of it is such, that a mistake here has a most malignant efficacy, and is attended with a long train of dangerous consequences.—Nor can this appear strange, when it is considered, that the doctrine of *justification* is no other than the doctrine of *a sinner's acceptance with God*. Being of such peculiar importance, it is inseparably connected with many other evangelical truths; the harmony and beauty of which, we can never behold, while this is misunderstood: till this appears in its glory, they will be involved in clouds and darkness. It is, if any thing may be so called, a fundamental

mental article ; and certainly, requires, our most serious consideration*.

How

* Let it be carefully observed by the reader, that though I here treat upon justification as *distinct* from pardon ; yet I am fully persuaded, that they are blessings which can never be separated. For he who is pardoned, is justified ; and he who is justified, is also pardoned. It is readily allowed, that there is, in various respects, a great resemblance between the two blessings. They are both gifts of *grace*, rich, reigning grace ; both vouchsafed to the *same person*, at the *same time* ; and both are communicated through the mediation of Christ alone. Notwithstanding which agreement, the *signification* of the terms and the *nature* of the blessings intended by them are so far different, as to lay a sufficient foundation for distinguishing between the one and the other.—I would just hint at a few things in confirmation of this. When a person is pardoned, he is considered as a *transgressor* ; but when he is justified, he is considered as *righteous*. A criminal, when he is pardoned, is freed from the *obligation of suffering death* for his crimes ; but he that is justified, is declared *worthy of life*, as an innocent person. *Wisdom* is said to be justified ; *Christ* is said to be justified ; yea, *God himself* is said to be justified. (Matt. xi. 19. 1 Tim. iii. 16. Luke vii. 29. Rom. iii. 4.) But neither God, nor Christ, nor Wisdom, is ever said to be *pardon*ed ; nor, indeed, is it possible that they should be forgiven, in any sense. Though we may, therefore, with the scripture affirm, that they are *justified* ; we cannot, without the greatest absurdity or the rankest blasphemy, say they are *pardon*ed. This one consideration, I humbly conceive, is an irrefragable proof, that there is a *real*, an *important difference*, between justification and pardon. To

How shall man, sinful man, be just with God? is a question of the most interesting nature, to every child of *Adam*. A question which, notwithstanding its infinite importance, could never have been resolved by all the reason of men, nor all the penetration of angels, if the supreme Lord of heaven and earth had not exercised and manifested reigning grace, towards his disobedient and rebellious creatures. But, with the Bible in his hand, and the gospel-revelation in view, the mere babe in religious knowledge and christian experience, is not at a loss for an answer: *the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.* And such is the pleasure of God, that he frequently reveals this truth in its glory, to such as are esteemed *fools* by the haughty sons of science, that no flesh might have the least ground of boasting.

The word *justification* is a forensic term, and signifies *the declaring, or pronouncing a person righteous, according to law.* Justification is not the *making* a person righteous, by

which I may add, *Paul* treats upon them as distinct blessings, in his sermon recorded *Act* xiii. See 38th and 39th verses of that chapter.

a real

a *real, inherent change* from sin to holiness, in which the nature of sanctification consists; but it is the act of a judge, *pronouncing a person acquitted from all judicial charges*.—That justification does not consist in a real change from sin to holiness, will further appear from considering, that *justification* is diametrically opposite to *condemnation*. Now the sentence of condemnation is never supposed to *make* the person criminal, on whom it is pronounced. There is *no infusion* of evil qualities into the culprit's mind; nor is he, in the least, *made guilty* by it, in the eye of the public, or in his own estimation. But, being arraigned as a criminal, and proved guilty of a capital offence, according to the tenour of that law by which he is tried; he is *judged worthy of death*, and condemned accordingly.—So in justification: The subject of it is *pronounced righteous*, in the eye of the law; is deemed worthy to live, and his right to life is declared. Hence the justification of which the scripture speaks, and which is now the subject of our enquiry, is called a *justification of life* *. That the words *justify*, *justified*, and *justification*, are used in the sacred writings in

* Rom. v. 18.

a *law-sense*; and as opposed to the words *condemn*, *condemned*, and *condemnation*, is exceeding manifest to every attentive reader*.

Further: Justification, in a theological sense, is either *legal* or *evangelical*. If any person could be found, who has never, in the least instance, broken the divine law, he might be justified by it, in a way that is *strictly legal*. But in this way, none of the human race can be justified, or stand acquitted before God. For *all have sinned: there is none righteous, no not one*. The whole world, having transgressed, are guilty before the eternal Judge, and under the sentence of death by his righteous law. Here every offender is excluded from all hope, and abandoned to utter destruction. For, as an obedience absolutely perfect, is the only righteousness which the law can accept; so torment inconceivable and death eternal, are the only punishment that it will inflict, on such who fall under its curse. — That justification, therefore, about which the scriptures principally treat, and which

* To this purpose the following texts, instead of many more, may be consulted. Exod. xxiii. 7. Deut. xxv. 1. 1 Kings viii. 31, 32. Job xiii. 18. and xxvii. 5. Prov. xvii. 15. Matt. xi. 19. and xii. 37. Luke vii. 29. Rom. ii. 13. and iii. 4. and viii. 30, 33, 34.

alone

alone reaches the case of a sinner; is not by a *personal*, but an *imputed* righteousness; a righteousness *without the law* *, provided by grace and revealed in the gospel: for which reason, the obedience by which a sinner is justified, and his justification itself, are called *evangelical*. And in this affair, there is the most wonderful display of divine justice and boundless grace. *Of divine justice*; if we have respect to the *meritorious cause* and ground, on which the Justifier proceeds, in absolving the condemned sinner and pronouncing him righteous. *Of boundless grace*; if we consider the *state* and *character* of the persons, to whom the blessing is granted.

Again: Justification is either at the bar of *God*, and in the court of *conscience*; or in the sight of the *world*, and before our *fellow-creatures*. The former is by pure, unmixed grace, through *faith*; and the latter is by *works*. It is the *former* of these I shall now consider, which may be thus defined; *Justification is a judicial, but gracious act of God, by which the sinner is absolved from the guilt of sin, is freed from condemnation, and has a right to eternal life adjudged, for the sake of the obedience*.

* Rom. iii. 21.

dience of Christ alone, which is imputed to him and received by faith.

To justify, is evidently a divine prerogative. *It is God that justifieth.* That sovereign Being, against whom we have so greatly offended, whose law we have broken, by ten thousand acts of rebellion against him; has the sole right of acquitting the guilty and pronouncing them righteous, in the way of his own appointment. Jehovah, whose judgment is always according to truth, is the justifier of all that believe in Jesus.—Here grace reigns. For God, the infinitely wise God, appoints the way. God, the righteous and merciful God, provides the means. God—let the divine name be repeatedly mentioned with the profoundest reverence—even the God of all grace, imputes the righteousness and declares the sinner acquitted, in perfect agreement with the demands of his violated law, and the rights of his injured justice.

What is here, as well as in several passages of scripture, affirmed concerning God, considered *essentially*; is, in some places of the infallible word, more particularly appropriated *personally* to the Father*. Notwithstanding it

* Rom. iii. 26. 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

is manifest, that all the three divine Persons in the Godhead, are concerned in this grand affair; and each performs a distinct part in this particular, as also in the whole economy of salvation. The eternal *Father* is represented, in the volume of inspiration, as appointing the way and sending his own Son to perform the conditions requisite to our acceptance before him. The divine *Son*, as engaging to sustain the curse, and make the atonement; to fulfil the terms and provide the righteousness, by which we are justified. And the *Holy Spirit*, as revealing and testifying the perfection, suitableness, and freeness of the Saviour's work to the sinner: demonstrating his right to it, according to the gospel of sovereign grace; and, at the same time, witnessing to his conscience his justification by it in the court of heaven, which produces peace and joy in the heart †.—Thus the triune God justifies. And may I not ask, in the triumphant language of *Paul*; *Who shall*, who can *condemn*? If Jehovah pronounce the sinner acquitted, who, in earth or hell, shall reverse the sentence? If He,

† Rom. viii. 3. Heb. x. 7. Dan. ix. 24. Rom. v. 19. John xiv. 26. and xvi. 7, 8, 9, 10, 14.

who is the Most High, entirely justify, who shall bring in a second charge? There is no *higher* court, to which any appeal can be made. There is no *superior* tribunal, at which any complaint can be lodged, against any of those happy souls whose invaluable privilege it is, to be justified by the eternal God. When He acquits in judgment, he absolves from *all* guilt, he accepts as *completely* righteous; otherwise, a person, immediately after he is justified, must be supposed to stand in need of a further justification, which is highly absurd. This sentence shall never be made void, by any unworthiness of him on whom it is passed, nor by all the accusations of satan: but shall stand, *firmer* than the everlasting hills; *unshaken* as the throne of God. This sentence — let me dwell on the ravishing truth, let my very soul feast on the precious doctrine — this sentence, being the *justification of life*, is pregnant with all the blessings of the everlasting covenant; with all the felicity of the world of glory.

Great, superlatively great, glorious and divine, is the blessing of justification. Most ardently to be sought, most thankfully to be enjoyed. Can any one, conscious of possessing it, cease to exult in God his justifier; who,

by

by being so, is also the God of his praise? Or, who, that is sensible of his guilty, condemned condition, can cease to pray and most earnestly to long for it?—O, sinner! are you insensible of the worth of this blessing of grace, and supinely negligent about it? then be assured, that you are yet in your sins, and under condemnation; the justification of which I treat, is far from you. And what, if you should *never* be justified? What, if your affronted Sovereign should swear in his wrath, that he will *never* pardon, *never* accept you; but that you shall die under the curse, already passed upon you? In such a case, though awful beyond conception, what could you have to object? You have trampled his authority under your feet, and cherished a spirit of the most malignant enmity against him. Your conscience tells you, that you have neither obeyed his law, nor loved his gospel; that you have had little concern whether He was pleased or offended, so that you could but gratify your impetuous lusts and obtain your sordid purposes. You have, it may be, never considered the death of the Son of God, as worthy of your serious notice, though the greatest and most wonderful event, that ever happened in the universe, and the only thing
which

which can save you from final condemnation and eternal ruin.—Remember, thoughtless reader! that *you* have a cause depending, a cause which involves your *all*; to be tried at the bar of God, and before Jehovah your judge. An eternal hell to be suffered, or an eternal heaven to be enjoyed, and that by *you*; will be the awful or glorious consequence, of being cast or acquitted in judgment. And can you rest, can you take any comfort, while entirely ignorant whether the Judge immortal will absolve or condemn you? Consider the ground on which you stand, and the reason of the hope that is in you. A mistake about the way of your acceptance with God, will be attended with the utmost danger: such danger, that where it is final, it is followed by inevitable and eternal ruin. May the God of grace and the Father of lights, awaken the sleepy consciences of the inconsiderate, into an earnest solicitude about it! and direct the steps of such as are anxiously enquiring; *How shall men, how shall we, be just with God?*

The persons to whom the wonderful favour is granted, are *sinners* and the *ungodly*. For thus runs the divine declaration. *To him that worketh, is the reward*; the blessing of justification and eternal life, as connected with

with it; *not reckoned of grace, but of debt.* But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth—whom? the righteous? the holy? the eminently pious? Nay, verily, but the *UNGODLY*; his *faith*, or that in which he believes, *is counted unto him for righteousness**. From this remarkable text we learn, that the subjects of justification are such, who are not only destitute of a *perfect* righteousness, but who have performed *no* good works at all. Nor are they only described as having performed *no good works*, but also as being entirely destitute of every heavenly *quality* and righteous *disposition*. They are denominated *ungodly*, and *considered* as ungodly, when the ineffable blessing is bestowed upon them. The mere sinner, the ungodly person, he *that worketh not*; is the subject on whom grace is magnified, towards whom grace reigns, in justification. Thus it is written in those sacred canons of our faith and practice, which are unalterable.

Before I dismiss this important passage, I would take the liberty of presenting my reader with the thoughts of Dr. Owen upon it. “ To “ say, he who *worketh not*, is justified through

* Rom. iv. 4, 5.

“ believing;

“ believing; is to say, that his works, what
“ ever they be, have no influence into his
“ justification; nor hath God, in justifying
“ him, any respect unto them. Wherefore he
“ *alone* who worketh not, is the subject of
“ justification, the person to be justified.
“ That is, God considereth no man’s works,
“ no man’s duties of obedience, in his justi-
“ fication; seeing we are justified *freely by his*
“ *grace*. And when God affirmeth expressly,
“ that he justifieth him *who worketh not*, and
“ that *freely by his grace*; I cannot understand
“ what place our works, or duties of obedi-
“ ence, can have in our justification. For
“ why should we trouble ourselves to invent
“ of what consideration they may be, in our
“ justification before God, when he himself
“ affirms, that they are of none at all? Neither
“ are the words capable of any evading in-
“ terpretation. He that worketh not, *is* he
“ that worketh not, let men say what they
“ please and distinguish as long as they will.
“ And it is a boldness not to be justified, for
“ any to rise up in opposition to such express
“ divine testimonies; however they may be
“ harnessed with philosophical notions and
“ arguings, which are but as thorns and
“ briars, which the word of God will pass
“ through

“ through and consume.—But the apostle
“ further adds, in the description of the sub-
“ ject of justification, that God *justifieth the*
“ *ungodly*. This is that expression which
“ hath stirred up so much wrath among
“ many, and on the account whereof, some
“ seem to be much displeased with the apostle
“ himself. If any other person dare but say,
“ that God *justifieth the ungodly*; he is pre-
“ fently reflected on, as one that, by his doc-
“ trine, would overthrow the necessity of
“ godliness, holiness, obedience, or good
“ works. For what need can there be of
“ any of them, if God *justifieth the ungodly*?
“ Howbeit this is a periphrasis of God, that
“ he is he, *who justifieth the ungodly*. This
“ is his prerogative and property; as such
“ he will be believed and worshipped, which
“ adds weight and emphasis unto the expres-
“ sion. And we must not forego this testi-
“ mony of the Holy Ghost, let men be as
“ angry as they please.”

“ But the difference is about the *meaning*
“ of the words. If so, it may be allowed
“ without mutual offence, though we should
“ mistake their proper sense. Only it must
“ be granted, that God *justifieth the ungodly*.
“ That is, say some, those who *formerly were*
“ *ungodly*;

" ungodly ; not such who *continue* ungodly
 " when they are justified. And this is most
 " true. All that are justified, were before un-
 " godly ; and all that are justified, are at the
 " same instant made godly. But the question
 " is, Whether they are godly or ungodly,
 " *antecedently*, in any moment of time, unto
 " their justification ? If they are considered
 " as *godly*, and are so indeed ; then the
 " apostle's words are not true, that God
 " justifieth the *ungodly* ; for the contradictory
 " proposition is true, God justifieth none but
 " the *godly*. Wherefore, although in and
 " with the justification of a sinner, he is
 " made godly ; for he is endowed with that
 " faith which purifieth the heart, and is a
 " vital principle of all obedience, and the
 " conscience is purged from dead works by
 " the blood of Christ : yet, *antecedently* unto
 " his justification, he is ungodly, and *consi-*
 " *dered* as ungodly ; as one that *worketh not* ;
 " as one whose duties and obedience contri-
 " bute nothing to his justification. As he
 " worketh not, all works are excluded from
 " being the *cause* ; and as he is ungodly, from
 " being the *condition*, of his justification †."

† Dr. OWEN on *Justif.* chap. xviii.

Again :

Again: That the sinner, the ungodly person, is the only subject of justification, appears from hence. The Spirit of God speaking in the scriptures, repeatedly declares, that we are justified by *grace*. And grace, as already observed, stands in direct opposition to *works*; *all* works and worthiness of every kind and every degree. Whoever, therefore, is justified by grace, is considered as absolutely unworthy, in that very instant, when the glorious blessing is vouchsafed to him.—This momentous truth is set in the strongest light, in the following emphatical words. *Being justified freely by his grace**. *Freely*; *by grace*. If these words do not prove, that justification is *entirely* free, without the least respect to any supposed holy qualities in the sinner, or any good works performed by him, antecedent to his being possessed of the unspeakable favour; I think it is impossible to express any such thing. The most fruitful invention would be at a loss, to contrive a form of words better adapted to express the communication of any benefit, in a way of freest favour.—This text informs us, that, in respect to God, justification is an act of *pure*,

* Rom. iii. 24.

unmixed grace; exclusive of all good works, and absolutely independent on any such thing as human worthiness: and, in respect to us, that it is entirely *without cause*; for so the adverb, in the original, signifies †. The word *freely*, does not so immediately respect, either the blessing itself, or the Giver; as it does the *state* and *character* of the persons to whom the inestimable blessing is granted. It denotes that there is *no cause* in them, why they should be thus treated by a righteous God. In this sense the original word is used and translated in the following passage: *They hated me without a cause**. Was the holy, the harmless, the innocent Jesus hated, by the malevolent Jews, without the *least cause* in himself? Certainly: to suppose or assert the contrary, would be a contradiction of the sacred text, and blasphemy against the Son of God. The person, therefore, that is justified *freely* by grace, is accepted *without any cause* in himself. Nothing in him or about him, is considered by the sovereign Dispenser of every favour, when he bestows the blessing, as preparing or qualifying for it.

† δωρεᾶν.
Septuag.

* John. xv. 25. Ps. xxxv. 19. lxix. 4.

Hence it appears, that if we regard the persons who are justified, and their *state* prior to the enjoyment of the immensely glorious privilege; grace, divine grace, appears and reigns in all its magnificence and glory. There being no conditions or pre-requisites; no terms to be fulfilled, or good qualities to be obtained, either with or without the divine assistance, in order to a full discharge before the eternal Judge. Justification is a blessing of pure grace, as well as transcendently excellent. So the true believer esteems it, and as such rejoices in it. In this, as in every other part of his salvation, he is willing to be nothing, less than nothing; that grace may *reign*, that grace may be *all in all*.

The various facts and testimonies produced from sacred writ, when treating about the *freeness* of pardon, equally prove the point under consideration; and might, together with many others, be adduced and pleaded on the present occasion. For he that is pardoned, is justified, and he that is justified is pardoned, as before observed. Consequently, if our pardon be *free*, our justification cannot be *conditional*. But, to avoid prolixity, I shall not further enlarge in proof of the glorious truth; only would just observe—That, so

great a blessing, yet *absolutely free*; so divine a favour, yet suspended on *no condition*, to be performed by the sinner, discovers astonishing grace. This must silence the fears and raise the hopes of the guilty, the accursed, the self-condemned. And may their hopes be raised by such a consideration; and by beholding the glory of that infinite Being, whose honour and sovereign prerogative it is, to be *inviolably just*, yet the *Justifier of the ungodly*.

Having considered the *previous state* of the person whom God justifies, and the *freeness* with which the important and most necessary blessing is bestowed upon him; the *way* appointed in the eternal counsels and revealed in the everlasting gospel, in which the condemned criminal may be honourably acquitted before the divine tribunal and accepted as righteous, now demands our attentive regard. And here we behold, the *immaculate holiness* of the Deity, and the *strict justice* of the Lawgiver, harmonizing with his *tendereſt mercy* and *freest favour*.—Nor can it be otherwise. The Judge of all the earth must do right. He will, he can acquit none without a *righteousness*. For, to justify

justify a person, and to pronounce him righteous, are the same thing. Justification is evidently a *forensic* term, and the thing intended by it, a *judicial* act. So that, were a person to be justified without a righteousness, the judgment would not be according to truth; it would be a false and unrighteous sentence.

Again: The righteousness by which we are justified must be *perfect*; must be adequate to the demands of that law, according to which the sovereign Judge proceeds in our justification. Every judge, it is evident, must have some rule by which to proceed in his judicial capacity. This rule is the law. To talk of passing judgment, without having any respect to a law, is absurd, and involves a contradiction. For to *judge* is nothing else but to determine, whether the object of judgment be *according to rule*. A judge first considers what is fact, and then, comparing the fact with the rule of action, he pronounces it right or wrong, and approves or condemns the performer of it.—An imperfect obedience, therefore, before a judge, is *not* righteousness. For righteousness is no other than a *complete conformity* to that law, which is the rule of our conduct. To accept of any obedience short of the rule, instead of that which perfectly answers it, is to act, not

in the capacity of a *righteous judge*, but under the character of an *absolute sovereign*. And so Jehovah himself declares, that he *will by no means clear the guilty in judgment*; that he *will not at all acquit the wicked*; and, consequently, that he will justify none without a *perfect righteousness*. — That obedience, therefore, which is available for this grandest of all purposes, must answer the demands of the law. It must be such as will vindicate the honour of divine justice and eternal truth, in declaring the subject of justification *completely righteous*. Yes, reader, it must be such as you may venture to plead, without the least imputation of arrogance, at the throne of grace, and the bar of judgment: such to which you may warrantably ascribe your happiness in the heavenly world, and in which you may glory to all eternity.

Many persons talk of, I know not what, *conditions* of justification; some supposing one thing, and some another to be the condition of it. But from hence it appears, that the only condition of our acceptance with God, is a *perfect righteousness*. This the law requires; nor does the gospel substitute another. And as the divine law can have no more, so it will admit of no less. Such persons, therefore, who think of any thing short

hort of a complete obedience being sufficient; let them call the supposed condition by what name they please; would do well to consider, how they can free themselves from the charge of *Antinomianism*. For the gospel does not, in any degree, make void the law. So far from it, that the voice of the gospel and the death of Christ, demonstrate Jehovah to be absolutely inflexible, as to all that his holy law requires or forbids. The way in which sinners are justified, does not in the least infringe on its rights. For, considered as *moral*, it is unalterable and eternal. Perfect obedience was demanded by it of man, while in a state of innocence, as the condition of life. Perfect obedience it still requires of man, though in a state of apostasy. And perfect obedience it must have, either at our own, or a surety's hand, or we must fall eternally under its curse.

Where, then, shall we find, or how shall we obtain a justifying righteousness? Shall we flee to the *law* for relief? shall we apply, with diligence and zeal, to the performance of *duty*, in order to attain the desired end? Such a procedure, though it might flatter our pride, would betray our ignorance, disappoint our hopes, and issue in eternal ruin.—

The apostle of the *Gentiles*, when professedly handling the doctrine of justification, positively affirms and strongly proves, that there is no acceptance with God *by the works of the law*. Now *the works of the law*, are those duties of piety and humanity which the law requires. Nor can any acceptable obedience be performed, which is not required by that law, which demands perfect love to God, and perfect love to man. So that when the infallible teacher excludes *the works of the law*, from having any concern in our justification, he entirely rejects *all* our works, *all* our duties, of every kind. But, let us hear his words and consider their import.

By the deeds of the law, by our own obedience to it, however sincere; *shall no flesh be justified*, accepted of God and pronounced righteous *in his sight*. And the reason is evident; *for by the law is the knowledge of sin*, as an opposition to the divine revealed will, and as deserving an everlasting curse*. If so, it is absolutely impossible that we should be justified by it; for a law which proves us guilty, is far from pronouncing us righteous in the eye of the lawgiver.—*The law entered,*

* Rom. iii. 20. Gal. ii. 16.

was re promulgated at *Sinai*, that the offence might abound; that the abundance of our iniquities might be manifested, and their exceeding sinfulness appear†.—*The law worketh wrath*; it reveals the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. It fastens a charge of guilt on the criminal, and works a sense of deserved wrath in his conscience. So far from justifying any offender, that it denounces utter destruction against him, and unsheathes the sword of vengeance‡.—*As many as are of the works of the law*; who do their best endeavours to keep it, and are looking for justification by it; *are*—what? In a promising way to obtain acceptance with God, and to be rewarded with eternal life? quite the reverse. They are *under a dreadful curse*. *For it is written*, by the pen of infallibility, and is awfully expressive of Jehovah's unchangeable purpose; **CURSED IS EVERY ONE**, without any respect of persons, without any regard to pleas; **THAT CONTINUETH NOT IN ALL THINGS** which are written in the book of the law to do them*. From this alarming text we learn, that there never was, nor can be any accept-

† Rom. v. 20.

‡ Rom. iv. 15.

* Gal. iii. 10.

ançé

ance with God, without a perfect obedience. An obedience, perfect in its principle, complete in all its parts, and without the least interruption in thought, word, or deed. For he who *fails in one point*, breaks the whole law, is guilty before God, and exposed to ruin †.

The apostle argues in proof of the point, from the opposition there is, between living *by faith*, and living *by the works of the law*. These are his words ; *That no man, however excellent his moral character, however righteous in his own esteem ; is justified by his own obedience to the law in the sight of God, it is evident : For the just, the truly righteous and justified person, shall live by faith. And, that he does not obtain the character and enjoy the blessedness connected with it, in virtue of his own obedience, appear from hence ; the law is not of faith, it makes no mention of a Redeemer, or of believing in him. But, its uniform language is, the man that doeth them ; that punctually performs the duties enjoined, and entirely avoids the things prohibited ; he, and he alone, shall live in them, shall find acceptance and enjoy peace* †.

† Jam. ii. 10.

‡ Gal. iii. 11, 12.

The inspired penman, ever jealous of his Master's honour, ever concerned for the glory of divine grace, argues from an *absurdity*; an absurdity, obvious to the meanest capacity, and shocking to every mind, that has the least esteem for the Lord Redeemer. *If righteousness come by the law*; if men either were or could be justified, by their own duties and endeavours, *then* it would inevitably follow, that *Christ is dead in vain*; all his obedience and all his sufferings were useless things, there was no occasion for them*. And again; *If they which are of the law be heirs*; if they who rely on their own legal performances, be accepted of God and entitled to the heavenly inheritance; *faith*, in a dying Redeemer, is made entirely *void*, and the promise of life by him, is made of none effect†.

Nor are *the works of the law*, which *Paul* so expressly and repeatedly excludes from having any concern in our justification, to be understood only of an obedience to those *positive* rites and *ceremonial* institutions of *Je-hovah*, which, being of a temporary kind, were abrogated by the death of *Christ*. His design was to set aside all our obedience to

* Gal. ii. 21.

† Rom. iv. 14.

every

every law; all our own works and duties of every kind. That this was the intention of the sacred writer, appears from the following considerations. — The apostle excludes *all* works in general. *God imputeth righteousness without works.* *By grace ye are saved—not of works.* *If by grace, then it is no more of works.* *Not by works of righteousness which we have done.* *Who hath saved us—not according to our works* [†]. He does not only say, that we are not justified by the works of the law; but also, that we are not justified by works; performances, duties, obedience, in general, what rule soever may be their object, or however they may be denominated. He does not give the least hint, as if he meant only to exclude the works of some *particular* law, or duties of some particular kind, in contradistinction to others. And when the Spirit of God declares, that we are not justified by works, without limiting the phrase to any *particular kind* of duties; what authority have we to restrain the sense to this or that sort of works, to the exclusion of others? For, as all duties performed in obedience to a

[†] Rom. iv. 6. Eph. ii. 8, 9. Rom. xi. 6. Tit. iii. 5.
2 Tim. i. 9.

law, are *works*, whether the law be considered as moral or ceremonial, old or new; so all works, whatever they be, are here excluded without any exception.

Again: That law which the apostle designs, stands in direct opposition to the *grace* of the gospel and the *promise* of life; to *faith* in Jesus and the *righteousness* of faith. *The promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. Because the law worketh wrath; for where there is no law, there is no transgression. Therefore, it is of faith, that it might be by grace, that the promise might be sure to all the seed**. Now it is the *moral*, and not the ceremonial law, which stands opposed to grace and the promise, to faith and the righteousness of faith. For the *ceremonial* law exhibited, in various ways, the *grace* of God, the promised *Messiah*, and *life* by him, as the great objects of *faith* and *hope* under the ancient *Jewish* *economy*: it cannot, therefore, be stated and considered in this contrasted

* Rom. iv. 13, 14, 15, 16.

view,

view, without a manifest impropriety. But the moral law is *not of faith*; it contains no revelation of grace; it exhibits no foundation of trust, no object of hope, for guilty sinners; nor does it make the least promise to them, but all the reverse.—Besides, the law here intended *worketh wrath*. By a transgression of it, wrath is incurred; and by a conviction of the evil of such disobedience, a sense of deserved wrath possesses the conscience. Which, though perfectly applicable to the moral law, and to mankind in general, as breakers of it; yet cannot be affirmed of the ceremonial institutions, neither in respect to *Jews* nor *Gentiles*. As to the *former*, those rites were long since abrogated: as to the *latter*, they never were under any obligation to observe them.

Further: The important *reasons* assigned by the sacred disputant, why we cannot be justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus, make it evident, that he intended to exclude, not only all ceremonial performances, but also all our moral obedience. Having asserted, that there is no justification by the deeds of the law, he adds; *For, by the law is the knowledge of sin* †. Now the apostle

† Rom. iii. 20.

informs

informs us, from his own experience, that the knowledge of sin comes by *that law*, which forbids all irregular desires and every unsanctified affection. *I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet* †. Hence it is plain to a demonstration, that all the deeds and duties of that law, by which is the knowledge of sin, are entirely excluded from all concern in our justification: and that the law which convinces of sin, is spiritual; reaches the thoughts and intents of the heart; and says, *Thou shalt not covet*. Whether it be the moral or ceremonial law, which is here intended, the reader, I presume, will be at no great loss to determine.—Another reason assigned is, *lest any man should boast*. *By grace ye are saved—not of works, lest any man should boast*. *To declare at this time his righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus*. *Where is boasting then? it is excluded*. *By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith*. From whence the apostle infers the following conclusion. *Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the*

† Rom. vii. 7.

law †. Now of what are men ready to boast, in a religious view, but of their supposed moral goodness? Of what, but the integrity of their hearts and the regularity of their lives; their sincere intentions and pious performances? These, therefore, we may justly infer, are entirely excluded. For if no works be excepted but those of a ceremonial kind, and if our moral obedience be any way concerned in procuring acceptance with God, how is boasting excluded? Does not the performance of *moral precepts* afford as fair a ground for boasting, as a submission to *ceremonial rites*? and were not the ancient pharisees guilty in *both respects* ||?

Nor is *faith* itself our righteousness, or that for the sake of which we are justified. For though believers are said to be justified *by* faith, yet not *for* faith. That faith is not our righteousness, is evident from the following considerations.—No man's faith is *perfect*; and if it were, it would not be equal to the demands of the divine law. It could not, therefore, be accounted or accepted as a complete righteousness, without an error in judgment. But the judgment of God is ac-

† Eph. ii. 8, 9. Rom. iii. 26, 27, 28.

|| Luke xviii. 11.
cording

cording to truth, and according to the rights of his law, as before proved.—That obedience by which a sinner is justified, is called *the righteousness of faith*; *righteousness by faith*; and is said to be *revealed to faith*†: consequently, it cannot be *faith itself*. For, as it is *of another*, *by another*, and *revealed to another*, it must be *distinguished from* that other.—Faith, in the busines of justification, stands *opposed* to all works. *To him that worketh not*, but *believeth*. But if it were our justifying righteousness, to consider it in such a light would be highly improper. For, in such a connection, it falls under the consideration of a *work*, a *condition*, on the performance of which our acceptance with God is suspended.—If faith itself be that, on account of which we are accepted, then some believers are justified by a *more*, and some by a *less perfect* righteousness, in exact proportion to the strength or weakness of their faith. *He was strong in faith*—*O, ye of little faith*. Consequently, more of justice and less of grace would appear in the justification of some, than in that of others; or else some must be more fully justified than others; each of

† Rom. iii. 22. Philip. iii. 9. Rom. i. 17.

which is absurd.—That which is *the end of the law*, is our righteousness; which, certainly, is not faith, but the obedience of our exalted Substitute. *Christ is the end of the law, FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, to every one that believeth.*—That righteousness by which many are justified, is the obedience of *One*. The believer, therefore, is not justified for the sake of his own faith; for then there must be as many distinct righteousnesses, as there are justified persons.—If faith itself be our justifying righteousness, then we may, without either pride or folly, *depend* upon it, *plead* it before God, and *rejoice* in it. For whatever the Most High is pleased to *accept* as our righteousness, may be *pleaded* before him as such. And whatever may be so pleaded, must be esteemed a proper ground of our *confidence*—may be used as an argument in prayer, at the throne of grace, and as the foundation of our hope of final happiness. And whatever is thus the ground of our confidence, must be the fruitful source of our *spiritual joy*. So that, according to this notion, not *Christ*, but *faith*, is the capital thing, the object to which we must look. The glorious Redeemer and his undertaking, are only considered as a kind of *auxiliaries* in the

the affair of justification ; while faith is the *grand requisite*, as it renders Immanuel's work effectual, and crowns the whole.—Once more: To understand those words, *Faith was imputed to him for righteousness*, in the *Arminian* sense, is to contradict the whole scope and design of the apostle's argumentation, when treating about the justification of sinners. For his main design is to prove, that the eternal Sovereign justifies *freely* ; *without any cause* in the creature. But, according to this hypothesis, *faith* is the condition, is the cause, is that on account of which we are accepted as righteous. For it is considered under the formal notion of righteousness*.

But is not that law which man was originally under, which requires an absolutely perfect obedience, and denounces a curse on the least offender, abrogated by the mediation of Jesus ? and is not a *new, remedial, milder* law introduced in its stead ; one that is more happily adapted to the infirmities of a fallen creature, requiring only a *sincere* obedience, as the condition of acceptance before the sovereign Judge ? No : For, not to take notice

* Hence it appears, that it is not *faith itself*, but its glorious *Object* which *Paul* intends, when he speaks of *faith being imputed for righteousness*.

that such a scheme represents the gospel as *making void the law*; not to mention many other things which might be urged; the sentiment supposes, that the old, the eternal law of God, was either too *strict* in its precepts, or too *severe* in its sanction; and, that its requirements never were, nor ever will be performed, either by ourselves or our Surety. An imagination this, which deserves the utmost abhorrence; as, in one view, it denies perfection to that law, which is *holy, and just, and good*; and as, in another, it highly reflects on the wisdom, or equity, or goodness of the supreme Legislator; in enacting a law, the repeal of which was so necessary, in order to accomplish the designs of his grace.—Besides, the scheme is absurd. For it supposes that the law which man is now under, requires only an *imperfect* obedience. But an imperfect righteousness cannot answser its demands, whether it be denominated *old* or *new*. For every law requires perfect obedience to its own precepts and prohibitions. Whatever law we are supposed to be under, it must be the standard of duty and the rule of our obedience; and every rule requires, and cannot but require, a complete conformity to itself. That law which forbids every

irre-

irregularity in our tempers and conduct, whatever name it may bear, is the rule of our duty, the law which is now in force; otherwise, such irregularity would not be sin; such a deviation from perfect rectitude, would be no fault. That which is not prohibited, that which is the breach of no law, cannot be sin; *for sin is a transgression of the law.* If, then, we are forbidden to commit sin, it must be by a law now in force; and if every sin be a breach of it, nothing short of perfect obedience can be required by it. Consequently, nothing can be accepted as righteousness, in the sight of God, but an obedience in all respects *complete*; a perfect obedience, either performed by us, or imputed to us*.

Nor

* To obviate objections and enforce my argument, I would take the liberty to introduce a paragraph or two, from a late excellent writer; who, when touching upon this subject, observes: "They," the *Arminians*, "strenuously maintain, that it would be unjust in God, to require any thing of us beyond our present power and ability to perform; and also hold, that we are now unable to perform perfect obedience, and that Christ died to satisfy for the *imperfections* of our obedience, and has made way that our imperfect obedience might be accepted instead of perfect: wherein they seem insensibly to run themselves into the grossest inconsistence. For they hold,

P 3

"That

Nor are we accepted of God on account of any holiness wrought in us, by the Holy Spirit,

“ That God, in mercy to mankind, has abolished that rigorous constitution, or law, that they were under originally; and, instead of it, has introduced a more mild constitution, and put us under a new law, which requires no more than imperfect, sincere obedience, in compliance with our poor, infirm, impotent circumstances since the fall.

“ Now, how can these things be made consistent? I would ask, What law these imperfections of our obedience are a breach of? If they are a breach of no law that we were ever under, then they are not sins. And if they be not sins, what need of Christ’s dying to satisfy for them? But if they are sins, and the breach of some law, what law is it? They cannot be a breach of their new law; for [according to their principles] that requires no other than imperfect obedience, or obedience with imperfections: and, therefore, to have obedience attended with imperfections, is no breach of it; for, ’tis as much as it requires. And they cannot be a breach of their old law; for that, they say, is entirely abolished, and we never were under it.—They say, it would not be just in God to require of us perfect obedience, because it would not be just to require more than we can perform, or to punish us for failing of it. And, therefore, by their own scheme, the imperfections of our obedience do not deserve to be punished. What need, therefore, of Christ’s dying to satisfy for them? What need of his suffering, to satisfy for that which is no fault, and, in its own nature, deserves no suffering? What need of Christ’s dying to purchase that our imperfect

“ obedience

Spirit, or any good works performed by us, through the assistance of divine grace, after regeneration.

“ obedience should be accepted, when, according to their scheme, it would be unjust, in itself, that any other obedience than *imperfect*, should be required? What need of Christ’s dying to make way for God’s accepting such an obedience, as it would be unjust in him not to accept? Is there any need of Christ’s dying to prevail with God not to do unrighteously?—If it be said, *That Christ died to satisfy that old law for us, that so we might not be under it, but that there might be room for our being under a milder law*: Still I would inquire, What need of Christ’s dying that we might not be under a law, which, by their principles, it would be in itself unjust that we should be under, whether Christ had died or no, because, in our present state, we are not able to keep it?

“ So the *Arminians* are inconsistent with themselves, not only in what they say of the need of Christ’s *satisfaction*, to atone for those imperfections which we cannot avoid; but also in what they say of the *grace* of God, granted to enable men to perform the sincere obedience of the new law. They grant, *that by reason of original sin, we are utterly disabled for the performance of the condition, without new grace from God*. But they affirm, *that He gives such grace to all, by which the performance of the condition is truly possible: And that upon this ground, He may and doth most justly require it*.—If they intend to speak properly, by *grace* they must mean, that assistance which is of grace, or of free favour and kindness. But yet they speak of it, as very *unreasonable, unjust*

generation. For, if we be the subjects of it, it is still *our own righteousness*, however attained or performed; and all our own righteousness is *as filth by rags*, and is entirely excluded.—This appears from hence. All righteousness consists, either in the habit or the act; either in the principle or the practice of it. Now if our *external* obedience to the commands of God be not our own righteousness, there is no such thing; and so the phrase, as used by men and in the sacred writings, must be entirely destitute of all propriety, sense and meaning. And as to the *principle* of all obedience, what is it but the *love of God*? This is purity of heart; this is true holiness. And though this heavenly affection be not natural to man, but a fruit of

“ *just and cruel*, for God to require *that*, as the condition
“ of pardon, that is become impossible by original sin. If
“ it be so, what *grace* is there in giving assistance and abi-
“ lity to perform the condition of pardon? Or why is that
“ called by the name of *grace*, that is an absolute *debt*,
“ which God is bound to bestow, and which it would be
“ unjust and cruel in Him to with-hold; seeing He requires
“ *that*, as the *condition* of pardon, which we cannot perform
“ without it?”—See that masterly work, entitled, *A careful
and strict Inquiry into the modern prevailing Notions of
that Freedom of Will, which is supposed to be essential to
Moral Agency, &c.* by, Mr. JONATHAN EDWARDS,
p. 220, 221, 222.

the

the Spirit; yet it is included under the general idea, of *our own righteousness*. For there is no such thing as *righteousness*, or moral goodness, where God is not the object of supreme affection, where our Maker is not sincerely loved. A rational creature that does not love the infinitely amiable Jehovah, is so far from having any thing which may be called *righteousness*, that he is actuated by the temper, and bears the very image of the devil. For, where divine love has no place in the heart, the dispositions of the mind are entirely sinful, and the whole conduct a direct opposition to the revealed will of God. Consequently, if nothing be worthy to be called *righteousness*, where the love of God has no influence; and if all our own obedience be excluded, in the article of justification; all that holiness and all those duties, which follow regeneration and are performed by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, must be totally set aside, as to that important affair. According to those words; *By grace ye are saved—not of works.* What works? those to which they were created in Christ Jesus, and in which God ordained that they should walk*.

* Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10.

—Hence]

—Hence it is, that *Paul* very evidently distinguishes, between that righteousness by which he was justified, in which also he desired to *be found*, and all his own holiness and righteous deeds. *And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith* *. Nor can any man, with the least shadow of reason, suppose, that the apostle ever imagined himself to have attained that holiness, or performed those good works, included under the general phrase, his *own righteousness*, without the divine assistance.

Again: To assert that our own righteousness is the *condition* of our justification, let the condition be ever so small, is to *confound* the two very different and opposite covenants of works and grace. What was the covenant of *works*? was it not a constitution which required a *personal* obedience, as the condition of life, and promised acceptance with God on the performance of that condition? This was the tenour of it, and in this its essence consisted. Whatever covenant, therefore, proceeds on the same terms, or has the nature

* Philip, iii. 9.

of

of them in it, however it may be varied in other respects, it is still the same. As in the renewal of the promise concerning the Mef-siah, in which the essence of the covenant of grace was contained, though the sovereign Dispenser of all good was pleased to vary his language, and to exhibit his mercy in different views, under the patriarchal, mosaic, and christian dispensations; yet it was always the same, in substance. So, whatever variations may be supposed to have taken place, respecting the covenant of works; so long as its grand characteristic, **Do THIS AND LIVE**, is retained, it is still the same covenant.—To set the point in a clearer light, be it observed, That our first parents, before the fall, were under the covenant of works: and, supposing they had performed the condition of it, they would have had a right to life, and would have enjoyed the promised blessing. And though the enjoyment of life was suspended on the performance of perfect obedience, yet that was easier to them, in their primitive state, than the least supposed condition would be to us in our fallen, corrupted state. And, how great soever the disparity was, between the obedience prescribed and the blessing promised; yet, had the condition

dition been performed, and life enjoyed in consequence of it, the happy state would have been possessed, not as a *gift* of grace, but as a *reward* of partial debt*. Nor would it have been of *grace* at all, in that sense in which the sacred writers use the term, when treating about the justification of sinners.

But supposing the condition of that covenant had been performed by our first father, and that life had been enjoyed by him, as the reward of his own obedience; how, or by what means, could he have performed it? By that power and rectitude with which his nature was endowed. But who gave him that power and rectitude? Who endowed him with those holy qualities, which fitted him for such obedience? Who maintained those moral abilities and preserved him in existence itself? The answer is obvious. Yet, his being furnished with sufficient powers and capacities, and having them preserved by the Lord his Maker, would not have prevented the reward of life from being by *works*. Life would still have been by the *legal* covenant; consequently, entirely opposite to that way of justification and happiness, which is revealed in the gospel.

* Rom. iv. 4.

Yet

Yet further, to evince the truth and confirm the argument, it may be observed; That the covenant of works itself did not require, even from innocent *Adam*, the performance of its condition by a power *independent* on divine assistance. Nor could it, consistent with the nature of a finite and dependent being, as man in his best estate, and every mere creature, must necessarily be. For *conservation* is as much owing to a divine power, as creation itself. Those holy qualities, therefore, with which man was at first endowed, could no otherwise be maintained, than by a continual divine influence from his Creator and Preserver. For if a divine power and agency be necessary to a continuance in *mere* existence, it must certainly be allowed necessary to an *holy* and *happy* existence; such as our original parents would undoubtedly have enjoyed, had they continued in a state of innocence.—If, then, we talk of *terms* and *conditions*, respecting the covenant of grace; the question is not, Whether they be *great* or *small*, *hard* or *easy*? but, Whether there be any condition *at all*, to be performed by the sinner, in order to obtain acceptance with God and a right to life? And, whether a supposition of any such thing, does not, in effect,

effect, annihilate all difference, between the *old* and the *new* covenant, the *law* and the *gospel, grace and works* * ?

If, then, the subject of justification be, in himself, ungodly ; if the supreme Governour of the world, neither will nor can justify any without a perfect righteousness ; and if such a righteousness cannot possibly be found in any of our own performances, nor in faith itself, nor in any of the graces or fruits of the Holy Spirit ; it is absolutely necessary that a righteousness wrought out by *another*, should be imputed to us, or placed to our

* If the covenant of grace be duly considered, it will appear, that the execution of it, and the final happiness of the covenantees, do not depend on the proper exercise of the *human will*, or on any condition to be performed by man : that covenant having all its virtue and benign efficacy, from the authority, love, and faithfulness of God himself. This glorious constitution consists of *absolute promises*. Eph. ii. 12. Jer. xxxi. 31—34. Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12. Nor is there any thing like a *condition*, which is not provided for and contained in the promises themselves. They, therefore, act a very injudicious part, who endeavour to explain the nature of this divine covenant, by considering the properties of those compacts which are common among men. For, in so doing, they entirely obscure the glory of sovereign grace, and leave the awakened sinner destitute of all hope. Vide OWEN's *Theolog.* p. 155, 156. Edit. Oxon. WITS. *OEcon.* 1. 3. c. 1. § 8—18.

account.

account. And where, where but in the *finished work of JESUS*, shall we find this vicarious righteousness? Yes, the spotless obedience, the bitter sufferings, and the accursed death of that heavenly Substitute, constitute that very righteousness by which alone a sinner can be justified before an holy God. That amazing work which the incarnate Son completed, when he bowed his sacred head and gave up the ghost, is the *grand requisite* to our justification before the heavenly tribunal. This, *this* is that alone, to which the eternal Sovereign has respect, when he pronounces the sinner righteous and acquits him in judgment. Hence we are said, to be *made righteous by the obedience of Christ*, and to be *justified by his blood**. This blood being shed, and that obedience being performed, by the glorious Surety, on the sinner's behalf and in his nature; are placed to his account, as fully and as much to his advantage, as if he had, in his own person, underwent the sufferings and performed the obedience.—The sufferings of the holy JESUS, those dreadful sufferings of the Son of God and Lord of glory, considered in connection with his consummate obedience to the preceptive part of the law, which, for

* Rom. v. 9, 19.

its super-excellency, is called THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD—these, including in them all that the righteous but broken law requires, being accepted by the Judge and imputed to the sinner, are the united cause, the *sole* matter and ground of his full discharge. This—let me indulge the pleasing idea, and repeat the precious truth—*this*, without any addition of any sort whatever, is that work for the sake of which, the wretched sinner is pronounced just and adjudged to life by Him, who is *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*. By this obedience the law is honoured, justice is satisfied. Jehovah declares himself well-pleased with it, and treats, as his children, all those who are found in it.

That we are not justified by a *personal*, but an *imputed* righteousness, appears from the scripture with superior evidence. There the doctrine is taught in the plainest terms; there the important truth is set in the strongest light. It was in this way, that Jehovah justified the father of the faithful; to the consideration of which notable example of divine grace and free acceptance, *Paul* referred his *Jewish* brethren for their conviction, and for the instruction of all who should at any time enquire

enquire after the methods of grace.—*Abraham* was the renowned progenitor of the *Israelitish* nation, and was honoured with the exalted character of, THE FRIEND OF GOD: His resignation and faith, his obedience and piety, stand on everlasting record. Few, among all the saints, ever manifested so cheerful a submission to the divine will, or so unreserved a confidence in the divine promise. No sooner did the true God signify his will to him, that he should leave his native country and his father's house, than he *obeyed; and went out, not knowing whither he went* †. No sooner did the great Possessor of heaven and earth intimate his sovereign pleasure, that he should sacrifice his only son, his *Isaac*, whom he loved, than he readily submitted; though the heavenly mandate was quite unprecedented, and the thought of performing it enough, one would think, to astonish and confound him. Yet these acts of obedience, though highly pleasing to God, and such as will be had in everlasting remembrance, were not the *cause* or *condition* of his justification. They, indeed, afforded the noblest testimony, that his faith was

† Gen. xii. 1. Heb. xi. 8.

genuine and his piety *real*; and in that sense he was *justified*, or declared righteous, *by his works* †. But they were far from being placed to his account, in the article of divine acceptance. *For if Abraham were justified by his own works*, though amazingly great, and in one instance quite unparalleled; *he hath whereof to glory*, in comparison with others, who come far short of that elevated pitch of obedience to which he arrived. *But* though he might, on such a supposition, have gloried before his fellow-creatures, yet *not before God*. *For what saith the scripture?* Abraham *believed* the promise of *God*, concerning the Messiah and the work to be accomplished by him, *and it was counted unto him for righteousness*. Nor was the method in which the eternal God proceeded, in the justification of this illustrious patriarch, any way singular. In this respect he had no exclusive privilege. For it is added, *Now it was not written*, in the ancient scriptures, *for his sake alone*, *that it*, the work of a dying and rising Redeemer, *was imputed to him*; *but for us also*, whether Jews or Gentiles, *to whom it shall be imputed*, *if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord*

† James ii. 21—25.

from

from the dead. For they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham *.—Now if a person of such victorious faith, exalted piety, and amazing obedience as he was, did not obtain acceptance with God on account of his own holiness or duties, but by an *imputed* righteousness; who shall pretend to an interest in the heavenly blessing, in virtue of his own sincere endeavours, or pious performances?—performances, not fit to be named, in comparison with those that adorned the conduct and character of, JEHOVAH's *Friend*.

The apostle having shewn in what way the father of the chosen tribes was justified before the King immortal; and having intimated, that the patriarch was considered as an *ungodly* person, as one who had done *no good works*, when the Lord imputed righteousness to him, in order to his final acceptance; to illustrate and confirm the momentous truth he maintains, he presents his reader with a description which *David* gives of the truly blessed man. And how does the royal psalmist describe him? To what does he attribute his acceptance with God? to an *inherent*, or an *imputed* righteousness? Does

* Rom. iv. 2, 3, 22, 23, 24. Gal. iii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

he represent him as attaining the happy state, and enjoying the precious privilege, in consequence of performing a sincere obedience, and of keeping the law to the best of his power? Nothing less. His words are, *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*—The blessed man is here described as one who is, in himself, a *polluted* creature and a *guilty* criminal. As one who, before grace made the difference, was on a level with the rest of mankind; equally unworthy, and equally wretched. And the sacred penman informs us, that all his blessedness arises from an *imputed* righteousness. For what else can be intended by those remarkable words, with which he introduces the evangelical declaration? *Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man*—what man? Why he *to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works*†. The righteousness here intended, cannot be understood of the person's *own* obedience; because it is expressly said, to be *without works*. His own virtues and duties, however excellent, contribute nothing towards it. It

† Rom. iv. 5, 6, 7, 8.

is perfect in itself, and entirely detached from every thing which he either has done, or can do.—The phraseology of the inspired writer is very remarkable. He does not only speak of blessedness, as the result of an *imputed* righteousness; but he describes the obedience which is thus applied to the sinner, as being *without works*. This he does, that he may more strongly assert the truth he defends, and more effectually secure the honour of grace. *Righteousness imputed: righteousness without the law: righteousness without works.* Such was the language of *Paul*; such were the doctrines he preached; and such was the faith of the primitive church. Now, alas, the phrases are rejected as obsolete, and are become offensive; so offensive, that their frequent use is looked upon, by the generality of those who call themselves christians, as a certain indication of an enthusiastick turn of mind. And, as the *language* is become obnoxious to the polite and the learned of the present age; so the *sentiment* expressed by it is discarded with contempt, as offering an insult to common sense. But, however much the doctrine of imputed righteousness may be despised as absurd, or abhorred as licentious, by any of our modern professors; it is evident from hence,

that the great apostle considered it, as intimately connected with the happiness of mankind, and esteemed the blessing as the only solid basis of all our hope and all our comfort.

Having seen what *Paul* says concerning the justification of *Abraham*, and the application he makes of that description which *David* gives of the blessed man; let us now consider, what was the foundation of his *own hope* of eternal felicity, and on what righteousness he relied. Of these particulars the infallible teacher informs us in the following passage. *Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in Him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith**.—In this context, the apostle relates his own experience. In these words he declares, what was the frame of his mind, and what were the views which he had, with regard to the doctrine of justification. Here he presents

* *Philip. iii. 8, 9.*

himself,

himself, as a guide and a pattern, to all who enquire after the way to happiness. Let us attend to his words, and a little more particularly consider their import.—*Yea, doubtless*; I affirm it with the utmost confidence, and am determined to abide by it. That *I count all things*; my birth-privileges, and pharaisaical zeal; my submiſſion to ceremonial rites, and performance of moral duties; these, *all* these, I esteem but loss. Nor do I only reject all my duties and all my doings before conversion; but also whatever I now have and all that I now perform, I count of no worth in the grand article of divine acceptance. These things, though highly ornamental, useful and excellent, when standing in their proper places and referred to suitable ends; are little, are nothing, are *loss* itself, compared with *the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*. Yea, such is the love that I have for my Saviour, and such the dependance I place on his righteousness, that, for his sake, *I have cheerfully suffered the loss of all things* which I once so highly valued. *And I do*, with the greatest deliberation again declare, in the presence of Him who searches the heart; that *I count them*, vile as the *offals* which are thrown to the

dogs, and loathsome as dung which is cast out of sight. Such is the worth of my own performances, and such my estimate of them, if set in competition with the work of Jesus, or presuming to stand in the place of his righteousness. Now, therefore, it is my chief desire and supreme concern, *that I may win Christ*, who is all-sufficient to supply every want, and to render me completely and eternally happy. That so, when the Judge ascends the throne, at the last tremendous audit; when all nations shall appear before Him, and when none but the perfectly righteous shall be able to stand, I may *be found in Him* the Beloved, as the Lord my righteousness. Then impartial justice must entirely acquit, and immaculate holiness completely approve. Would you know more particularly what I mean by being *found in Him*? It is, my *not having*, not depending upon, nor so much as once mentioning *mine own righteousness, which is of the law*; the holy qualities I now possess, the righteous deeds I have performed, in conformity to the law, as a rule of conduct, and by the influence of grace, as a principle of spiritual life. *But*, being adorned with and relying upon, *that glorious obedience which is through the faith of*

of Christ; which was finished by Him, is revealed in the gospel, and received by faith. Even that obedience which, being performed by the incarnate Son, is dignified with every excellence, and bears that exalted character,
THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD BY FAITH.

On this instructive and very important passage I would further observe, that the manifest design of the sacred penman in these words and the preceding context, is to shew; What that is, in which a sinner may safely *confide*, and what is a warrantable ground of *rejoicing*. He intimates, that there can be no *confidence* towards God, no acceptance with him, and, consequently, no cause of spiritual *joy*, without a righteousness: for condemnation and wrath must be our portion, if we appear in our sins before the righteous Judge. He further suggests, that there is a two-fold righteousness; that which he calls *our own*, which is of the law, and that which is *through the faith of Christ*, and is denominated *the righteousness of God*. These, he signifies, are entirely distinct, and are far from having a *united influence*, in procuring our justification: so far from it, that they are opposite and absolutely inconsistent, as to any such purpose. In reference, therefore, to acceptance

ceptance with the Most High, he who embraces the one, must reject the other; and on the one or the other, all mankind depend.—He also informs us, with all the fervour of holy zeal and in the most emphatical manner, which of these obtained his regard and supported his hope; was the ground of his confidence and the source of his joy. However the judaizing teachers, of whom he speaks in the beginning of the chapter, might confide in the flesh, or rejoice in their own duties; he was determined to adopt a very different method, and to seek for acceptance in a contrary way. Having warned them of their danger, and guarded the *Philippians* against their destructive mistakes; he declares, that the righteousness which he esteemed sufficient, was not *his own*; was not *of the law*; but a gift of grace, and *through the faith of Christ*. Even that obedience which Jesus performed, in the capacity of a surety; which is *without works* and *without the law*; was the object of his dependance, and in that alone he gloried. But as to all that is included under the phrase, *his own righteousness*, when he considered the purity of the divine law, the majesty of the eternal Judge, and that he must soon stand before

before him, he accounted it of no avail. Under such a consideration, he rejected it with the highest disdain, and poured the utmost contempt upon it, calling it *loss* and *dung*.—Such was the experience, and such was the hope, of that wonderful man, whose apostolic gifts and christian graces, ministerial usefulness and exemplary conduct; rendered him an eminent blessing to the world, and an honour to the great Redeemer's cause.

Many are the arguments which might be adduced from the unerring word, in proof of this capital doctrine and comfortable truth; but I shall only present the reader with the few that follow.—It has been before proved, that the subject of justification is an *ungodly* person. His pardon and acceptance, therefore, cannot be the result of his own obedience. And it is equally clear, that *as ungodly*, he cannot be justified. He must stand right in the eye of the law, and unreprovable before his Judge, before he can be acquitted in judgment. It must, consequently, be by the righteousness of *another*. And what, or whose righteousness can it be? Not the obedience of our fellow-mortals, who are already justified; that would be to adopt the exploded

exploded doctrine of supererogation. Not the sanctity of angels; they never became responsible for us. Not the essential rectitude of the divine nature; that is absolutely incommunicable. It must, therefore, be the righteousness of *Christ*; or his complete conformity to the holy law, as a voluntary substitute for the ungodly. And in what way can his obedience be applied to us, but by *imputation*? — This argument, I am persuaded, will remain conclusive till it be proved; either, that the subject of justification is *not*, in himself, *ungodly*; or, that the Judge of all the earth can justify *without* a righteousness. The *former* is expressly opposite to the divine testimony; the *latter* involves a direct contradiction.

Paul, when treating about our ruin by sin and recovery by grace, and when professedly handling this capital doctrine, in his epistle to the *Romans*; informs us, that *Adam* was a *type of Him that was to come*, even of the Lord *Messiah*. He forms a striking comparison between the first and the second *Adam*; between the disobedience of the one and the obedience of the other, together with the effects of each. He represents *Adam* as a public

public person, as constituted the federal head of all his posterity, and Christ as the representative of all the people of God. The first offence of the former, he signifies, was imputed to all his natural offspring; the complete obedience of the latter, is imputed to all his spiritual seed. By the imputation of that offence, all mankind were *made sinners*; came under a charge of guilt and the awful sentence of condemnation to eternal death: by the imputation of this obedience, all that believe are *made righteous*; are acquitted from every legal charge, and adjudged to eternal life: And as it was *one offence*, of *one man*, that brought death and misery on all the human race; so it is by *one righteousness*, of *one man*, even of the Lord from heaven and Jehovah's Fellow, that spiritual life and eternal happiness are introduced. According to that saying; *As by one offence, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by one righteousness, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous**.— That the *one offence*, and the *disobedience of*

* Rom. v. 18, 19.

one, are to be understood of *Adam's* actual transgression of the divine law, none can dispute. By his first iniquitous act and bold offence, many were *made sinners*, before they were guilty of actual crimes; so made sinners, as to be, on principles of justice, liable to condemnation and death. Nor is it conceivable how this could be, but by *imputation*: for which imputation, their natural relation to *Adam*, and his federal relation to them, were a sufficient foundation.—It is equally evident, that the *one righteousness* and the *obedience of One*, are the complete performance of the divine commands by our Lord Jesus Christ; his actual *conformity* to the holy law. This the antithesis, in the text, requires; this the scope of the apostle's reasoning demands. By this consummate obedience, *many are made righteous*. By this *one* most excellent *righteousness*, all that believe are *justified* and entitled to immortal glory, without any good works of their own, and before they have performed any acceptable duty. Now, in whatever way the first offence of our original parent, was made ours to condemnation; in the same way is the *righteousness* of his glorious Antitype, made

made ours to justification. If that was by imputation, so is this.

The momentous truth, for which I am pleading, is emphatically taught in the following nervous passage. *For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him**. From hence it is plain, that as Christ, the surety, was made sin, so are we made righteousness: in the very same way that our sins were made his, does his obedience become ours.—How, then, and in what sense, was the Holy One of God made sin? By being *punished* for it? No; for He was made that sin which he *knew not*. But he knew, by painful experience, what it was to be *punished*. Besides, he could not have been punished for sin, if he had not stood guilty in the eye of the law; for *punishment* always supposes *guilt*, either personal or imputed. A person may *suffer*, but he cannot be *punished*, without a previous charge of guilt; without being considered as the breaker of some law: for punishment is no other, than the evil of suffering inflicted for the evil of sinning.—

* 2 Cor. v. 21.

Was He made sin, by becoming a *sacrifice* for it? That he was such a sacrifice, is readily granted; is the christian's glory: but that this is the sense of the phrase, may be justly questioned. For, to omit other considerations, it is plain from the text, that he was made *that sin* which stands opposed to *righteousness*; which cannot be affirmed of an expiatory sacrifice. Nor could He have been offered, as an atoning victim, without having sin transferred to him, prior to his being offered. So that He was some way or other made sin, before he shed his blood and made expiation.—Was He, then, made sin by *infection*, or *transfusion*? Was it communicated to him, so as to *reside* in him? The idea is absurd; the fact was impossible, and the very thought is blasphemy.—It remains, therefore, that if he was made sin, in any sense, that sin which is opposed to righteousness; it must be by *imputation*. This was the way in which our adorable Sponser came under a charge of guilt. Hence it follows, by necessary consequence, according to the rule of opposition; except we would entirely destroy the apostle's beautiful antithesis, and the whole force of his argument; that they who are righteous, are made so by *imputation*, and by imputation

tion *only*. For as it is impossible that any person, perfectly innocent, should be made sin; but by having the sins of others placed to his account, or charged upon him in a judicial way; so they, who are in themselves guilty, cannot be made righteous in another and by his obedience, without having it imputed to them. And it is very observable, that as the blessed Jesus is said to be *made* sin, so we are said to be *made* righteousness. Strongly implying, that as it was not by any criminal conduct of His, that he became sin; so it is not by any pious activity of ours, that we become righteous. That, as it was not on account of any evil qualities infused, that He was treated by divine justice as an offender; so it is not in virtue of any holiness wrought in us, that we are accepted and treated as righteous. And as that sin, for which the condescending Jesus was condemned and punished, was not found in him but charged upon him; so that righteousness, by which we are justified and entitled to happiness, is not inherent in us but imputed to us.

The *objections* also, with which the apostle meets, and the way in which he refutes them, when treating about the doctrine of

justification, strongly imply, that his design was to *exclude, entirely* to exclude, all the works of every law, and all duties of every kind: consequently, that our acceptance with God is a blessing of pure grace, and only by an imputed righteousness.—The objections suppose, that the method of justification, as stated and explained by *Paul*, is not only *highly injurious* to the interests of holiness, but *absolutely subversive* of all morality. His doctrine was charged with *making void the divine commands*—with encouraging those who espoused it, to *continue in sin, because they were not under the law*—to multiply transgressions, *that grace might abound*—and to do all manner of evil, *that good might come**.—Now if *Paul* had taught, or given the least intimation, that any holy dispositions or righteous deeds, were any way necessary to a sinner's justification; if he had not, in reference to that affair, renounced all human obedience in the fullest sense, and directed his hearers to place their whole dependence on the work and worthiness of Christ alone; it is highly improbable, that the apostolic truth would have been charged

* Rom. iii. 8, 31. and vi. 1, 15.

with

with such horrid consequences. For, on that supposition, the enemies of sacred truth would not have had the least plausible pretence, for charging his doctrine with licentiousness.

But supposing any, through stupid ignorance or violent prejudice, to have so far mistaken his meaning, as to imagine; That he *entirely rejected* all holy desires and pious endeavours without exception, as constituting no part of that righteousness for the sake of which a sinner is justified; when at the same time he only excluded a *spurious* kind of holiness, and works of a *particular sort*; we may reasonably conclude, had that been the case, that in his replies to those reproachful charges which were brought against his ministerial character, and against that truth which was dearer to him than his very life, he would not have failed to point out the egregious mistake on which the objector proceeded, by making the necessary distinctions between those works he did admit, and those he entirely renounced.—Had he rejected only the works of the *ceremonial* law, or such duties as are performed *before* regeneration and *without* the aids of grace, while he maintained the necessity of *evangelical* obedience;

it would have been easy, natural, and even necessary for him to have drawn the line of distinction, in order to prevent future mistakes, when he attempted to refute the blasphemous accusations. But not the least trace of any such distinction appears, in the answers which he returned to the several hateful charges exhibited against him. He does not so much as once hint, that the objector was under a mistake in supposing, that he entirely excluded all the duties and doings of men without any difference.

When he puts the objection, *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?* he answers by a strong negation, expressing the utmost abhorrence of any such thought; *God forbid!* And then argues from an absurdity; *How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* By which he signifies, that they who are the subjects of grace and believe in Jesus, being dead to sin, *cannot* walk in the ways of ungodliness. Because so to do, would be absolutely inconsistent with their new state, and with that principle of spiritual life which they have received. But he gives not the least intimation of the necessity of holiness or obedience, in order to gain the favour of God,

God, or procure acceptance with him.—If my reader should suppose, that his views of justification are the same which *Paul* had, and yet is persuaded that some holiness, or moral goodness of his own, is necessary to obtain pardon, or procure acceptance; I would advise him to consider, whether, if his sentiments were charged with being licentious, he would not immediately think of a *different reply*; one better adapted to answer his purpose, than any of those which the apostle made in a similar case. And, whether he would not be ready to vindicate his faith by observing, That as he had no expectations of being accepted before the eternal Sovereign, without a *personal* obedience, to charge him with *making void the law*, or with saying, *let us do evil that good may come*; could proceed from nothing less, than the most palpable mistake, or the greatest malevolence.— Such persons, however, as maintain the necessity of good works, in order to justification, are in very little danger of being charged with holding licentious principles; which is a strong presumptive argument, that the doctrines which they espouse, are not the same that *Paul* preached and the primitive saints professed. For, that their cha-

racter and sentiments were so aspersed, is clear beyond a doubt; and it does not appear that natural men are any more capable of discerning spiritual things, or any more friendly towards the genuine gospel now, than they were in the apostolic times.

Finally: That righteousness by which we are justified, is a *free gift*. *The gift of righteousness*, says the apostle. And they who possess it are said, not to perform, but *receive it* *. The gospel, proclaiming the sufficiency, suitableness, and freeness of it, is from thence denominated, *the word of righteousness*; *the ministration of righteousness*†. And one of the glorious characters which our divine Sponsor bears, is, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**.—In perfect correspondence with which, He is said to be *made unto us righteousness*; and it is affirmed of believers, that they are *made the righteousness of God in Him* ‡. Hence it is that they are declared, by the Spirit of infallibility, to be *justified in Him*; *accepted in Him*; *complete in Him*, and *saved in Him* ||.—Such is the di-

* Rom. v. 17.

† Heb. v. 13. 2 Cor. iii. 9.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 30. 2 Cor. v. 21.

|| Isa. xlv. 25. Eph.

i. 6. Col. ii. 10. Isa. xlv. 17.

vinely appointed method of justification; and such the provision which grace has made, for the final acceptance of the guilty, the ungodly and wretched.

The grand design of the gospel, is to *reveal this righteousness of God*, and to display the riches of that grace which provided and freely bestows the wonderful gift. The gospel informs us, that what was required, on the part of the sinner, both as to doing and suffering, was performed by our glorious Substitute. This perfect obedience, therefore, being revealed in the word of truth for the justification of sinners, it is the business of *faith*—not to come in as a *condition*; not to assert its own importance, and share the glory with the Saviour's righteousness—but, to *receive* and *rely* on it, as absolutely sufficient to justify the most ungodly sinner, and entirely free for his use. For what is the faith of the gospel, but *the receiving of Christ and his righteousness**. Or, in other words, *a dependance on the blessed Jesus alone, for eternal salvation*? A dependance upon Him,

* Isa. xlvi. 22. John i. 12. Col. ii. 16. Rom. i. 17. and v. 17.

as *all-sufficient* to save the most guilty; as every way *suitable* to supply the wants of the most needy; and as *absolutely free* for the vilest of sinners. The divine Redeemer and his finished work being the *object* of faith, and the report of the gospel its warrant and ground; to believe, is to trust entirely and without reserve, on the faithful word which God has spoken, and on the perfect work which Christ has wrought. Such is the faith of God's elect. And the comfortable evidences of its truth and reality are, the love of God and holy obedience; peace of conscience and an hope of glory. These, to a greater or less degree, are its proper effects and genuine fruits.

Happy, thrice happy are they, who are interested in the divine righteousness, and who, by faith, have received the atonement. Such, all such, are pronounced righteous by the eternal Judge. There is nothing to be laid to their charge. They are acquitted with honour to all the perfections of Deity, and everlastingly free from all condemnation. Their sins, though ever so numerous or ever so hateful, being purged away by atoning blood, and their souls being vested with that best, that most excellent robe of the

the Redeemer's righteousness; they are *without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*. They are *presented*, by their great Representative, *in the body of his flesh, through death, holy, unblameable, and unreproveable* in the sight of the omniscient God. They are fair, as the purest wool; whiter, than the virgin snow.—Yes—let believers exult in the thought!—the work and worthiness of the Lord their Redeemer, give them acceptance with infinite Majesty, and dignity before the angels in light. These afford consolation on earth, and procure estimation in heaven. Through these they shall stand with courage, at the bar of judgment, and make their appearance with honour, among the inhabitants of glory.—Let the legalist boast of his good works, his pious services and strict holiness; the man that is taught of God esteems them all, sordid as dross and vile as the dung; lighter than vanity and worse than nothing, if set in competition with Christ, or presuming to stand in the place of his matchless obedience. Were he endowed with all the shining virtues that ever adorned the lives and characters of the most excellent saints; did he possess the exemplary meekness of *Moses*, and the amazing patience of *Job*; the ever-active

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zeal of *Paul*, and the love which glowed in the bosom of *John*; he *would* not, he *durst* not advance the least claim to justification and eternal life on this footing. No, blessed *Jesus*! it is in thy righteousness alone, that he dares to confide; it is in thy obedience alone, he presumes to glory.—This obedience is an immovable basis for the anxious mind to rest upon by faith. This is a sure foundation to support the believer's hope of glory, even when he views the righteous law in all its strictness and unabated purity. This foundation of hope and confidence, will bear up the soul in the views of death, and when on the very confines of an eternal world. Nor will it fail, such is its high perfection and sovereign efficacy, in the near prospect of the awful judgment. Here, then, *grace reigns*: in providing and freely bestowing this righteousness, and in our complete justification by it.

Since, then, it is the imputed righteousness of Christ alone, by which any of the children of men can be justified; let us look to it, rely on it, and glory in it. For it is dignified with every honourable character and free for our use. Cheering, charming thought!—This way of justification is calculated to pull down
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the pride of the self-righteous professor, who considers himself as standing on more respectable terms with his Maker, than his ungodly neighbour. Nor is it less happily adapted to raise the drooping spirits of the trembling sinner; of him who has nothing to plead why sentence of condemnation, already pronounced upon him, should not be executed in all its rigour. If, indeed, we were not allowed to look to this unequalled obedience, till conscious of having some righteousness of our own; we might then be discouraged: despair would be rational and damnation certain. But, thanks be to God for the unparalleled favour! this righteousness and justification by it are *free*, *perfectly* free for the worst of sinners. For the works of every law, in every sense, as performed by man, are entirely excluded from having any concern in our acceptance with God *. And as

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* The celebrated OWEN having quoted Rom. iii. 28. and iv. 5. and xi. 6. Gal. ii. 16. Eph. ii. 8, 9. and Tit. iii. 5. adds; "I am persuaded that no unprejudiced person, whose mind is not prepossessed with notions and distinctions whereof not the least tittle is offered unto them from the texts mentioned, nor elsewhere; can but judge, that the law in *every sense* of it, and *all sorts* of works " whatever,

it is in Christ and in Him alone, as our head, representative and surety, that we are or can be justified; He, and He alone, should have all the glory. He is worthy, infinitely worthy, to have the unrivalled honour.—Let the sinner, then, the ungodly wretch, trust in the obedience of Jesus, the dear, the dying Jesus; as being absolutely sufficient to justify him, without any good works or duties; without any good habits or qualities, however performed or acquired. And eternal Truth has declared, for his encouragement, that he shall not be disappointed†.

Here, sinner, self-ruined and self-condemned; even you who are ready to execrate the day of your birth, on account of your multiplied provocations and utter unworthiness; here is a complete righteousness revealed, for your full relief and immediate comfort. In which you may read the divine character; **JUST, YET THE JUSTIFIER OF THE UN-**

“ whatever, that at any time or by any means, sinners or believers, do or can perform; are, not in this or that sense, but every way and in all senses excluded from our justification before God. And if it be so, it is the righteousness of Christ alone which we must betake ourselves unto, or this matter must cease for ever.” *Doct. of Just.* chap.

14.

† Isa. xlv. 22. John vi. 37. Matt. xi. 28.

GODLY.

GODLY. True it is, if nothing but equity had appeared in Jehovah's name, nothing but misery could have been expected by the guilty. But when we behold the idea of a *compassionate Saviour*, connected with that of a *righteous Judge*, such a character, though supremely venerable, is strongly inviting ; it speaks deliverance and administers consolation. Yes, disconsolate soul, though you have no righteousness nor any recommendation, yet the wisdom of God has appointed a way, and the infinite riches of sovereign grace have provided effectual means, for your full discharge before the great tribunal ; and for attaining that honour and joy, which are commensurate to your utmost wishes ; which exceed your highest conceptions ; and shall render you happy to all eternity.—Is my reader oppressed with guilt, and harassed with tumultuous fears of future and deserved damnation ? wearied with *going about to establish his own righteousness*, and sensible that he is possessed of no worth, nor of any thing which might be a probable mean of recommending him to the Redeemer ? Remember, my distressed fellow-mortal, that no such recommendation is needful. Nothing is required, at your hand, for any such purpose.

purpose. "Come and take *freely*," is the language of Jesus. He has all that you want, however impoverished, and He gives all with the most liberal hand. *Grace reigns*, and let that be your encouragement when you think about acceptance with Christ, and of your justification in him before the Almighty.

If my reader, notwithstanding all that has been said, should yet think it prudent and safe, to depend on his own obedience; let me remind him, before I dismiss the subject, of the absolute purity and infinite holiness, the transcendent majesty and awful glories, of that GOD with whom he has to do, and before whom he must soon appear. Consider, vain, presumptuous mortal! that with the sovereign Judge, is *terrible majesty*. That *He is of purer eyes than to look upon evil, and cannot behold iniquity*; will by no means clear the guilty, and is *a consuming fire*. His *righteous judgment* is, that *they who commit sin, are worthy of death*; and, therefore, his law denounces an awful curse on every offender*. — Remember that he, whose supreme prerogative it is to justify, is a *jealous God*; jealous of his honour, as a righteous governor, and deter-

* Job xxxvii. 22. Hab. i. 13. Exod. xxxiv. 7. Heb. xiii. 29. Rom. i. 32. Gal. iii. 10.

mined to support the rights of his throne. And so terrible is his indignation, that when once his wrath is kindled, it will utterly consume every refuge of lies, *and burn to the lowest hell*.—So awfully majestic is Jehovah, that before Him, the everlasting *mountains quake, the pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof*. As his smile irradiates the countenances of angels, and crowns them with unutterable bliss; so his frown is nothing less than absolute destruction. So divine his purity and so dazzling his glory, that he *looketh to the moon and it shineth not, and the stars are not pure in his sight*. In his presence the flaming *seraphim*, those most exalted of mere creatures, *veil their faces and cover their feet*, in token of profound humiliation; while they cry, in loud responsive strains, *HOLY! HOLY! HOLY!* IS THE LORD OF HOSTS! How, then, to use the language of *Bildad* in *Job*; how, then, *can man be justified with God? or how can be be clean, before his Maker, that is born of a woman**? When He, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, whose peculiar province it is to

* *Nah.* i. 5. *Job xxvi.* 11. and *xxv.* 5. *Isa.* vi. 2, 3.
Job xxv. 4.

search the human heart and explore its latent evils; when He shall sift your conduct and mark your offences, *laying judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet*, you will not be able to *answer him one of a thousand*. And to what refuge will you then flee? Trusting in your own duties, you slight the great atonement; you despise the revealed righteousness; and Christ shall profit you nothing.—You may talk in lofty strains, about man's moral excellence, and the dignity of human nature; the worth of personal obedience, and the efficacy of penitential tears; you may declaim aloud, about the necessity of good works, and reject, with disdain, the doctrine of imputed righteousness, while your conscience is unimpressed with a sight of the divine purity, and a sense of the divine presence. But when you come to consider yourself as before the Most HIGH, and that the important question is; *How shall I be just before the Most HOLY?*—when you form your ideas of the God of heaven, not from the character you have drawn of him in your own imagination, but agreeable to that which is given in the inspired volume; then your pretensions to personal worthiness must subside, and your mouth must be stopped. Or, if not dumb,

dumb with silence, you will exclaim with the men of *Bethshemesh*, when Jehovah's hand was heavy upon them ; *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God**? And, if the atonement be not presented for your relief, you will be ready to add ; *Who shall dwell with devouring fire? who shall dwell with everlasting burnings*†?

The Holy Spirit, speaking in the scriptures, directs us to conceive of justification, as *before God and in his sight*‡. Intimating, that when our final acceptance is the subject of our enquiry, we should look upon ourselves as in the immediate presence of Him, who will soon ascend the *great white throne*, to pass the irreversible sentence ; that we should consider on what ground we shall be able to stand, when *heaven and earth shall flee away from the face of the eternal Judge, and no place shall be found for them*§. Yes, reader, if you would not deceive yourself in a matter of the last importance ; if you would come to a satisfactory persuasion, in what righteousness you may venture to trust, you should consider yourself as at the bar of

* 1 Sam. vi. 20. † Isa. xxxiii. 14. ‡ Ps. cxliii. 2. Rom. iii. 20. § Rev. xx. 11.

God, and as having a cause depending which is pregnant with your everlasting fate; a cause which must inevitably issue, either in your eternal happiness or infinite torment. You should anticipate, in your own meditations, that great decisive day, and then ask your own conscience; “On what shall I *then* de-
“ pend? or what shall I dare to plead, when
“ my astonished eyes behold my Judge?” And remember, that it would be superlative folly and madness for you to rely on any obedience *now*, or to dispute for it as necessary to justification, of which your own conscience cannot approve as a plea, which will *then* be admitted as valid.

Consider, yet further, the *ingenuous acknowledgments* and *deep confessions*, which the greatest saints and holiest men that ever lived, have made of their impurity and sinfulness, when their acceptance with that sublime Being, who is *glorious in holiness*, came under consideration.—Job was an eminent saint, he had not his equal on earth, according to the testimony of God himself. But, though he could vindicate his cause before his fellow-creatures, and maintain his exemplary conduct against the accusations of his censorious friends; yet, when the Almighty

mighty addressed him, and when he considered himself as standing before the divine tribunal, he says not a word about his inherent rectitude or pious performances: but, in language of the deepest self-abasement, he cries out; *Behold, I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* Yea, he declares, *If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.* *Though I were perfect, in my own apprehensions, yet, before Him that is infinitely holy, I would be so far from pleading my own extraordinary attainments, that I would not know my soul; yea, I would despise my life, with all its most shining accomplishments.* For, *if I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt Thou, O righteous and eternal Judge, plunge me in the ditch;* manifest me, notwithstanding all my endeavours to obtain purity and find acceptance, to be a polluted creature and a guilty criminal. So abominably filthy and highly criminal, that *my own clothes, were they sensible of my pollution and guilt, would abhor me.* For *He, to whom I am accountable, is not a man as I am; but a Being of such discernment, that the minutest fault cannot escape his notice;* and so perfectly holy, that the least

spot of defilement is infinitely abhorrent in his sight. It is, therefore, absolutely impossible *that I should answer him*; plead my cause and gain acceptance, on the foundation of my own obedience; *or that we should*, on any such footing, *come together in judgment*, without inevitable ruin to my person and all my immortal interests*.—*David*, that man after God's own heart, made it his earnest request, that God would *not enter into judgment with him*, according to the tenour of his own obedience: being well aware, that neither he nor any man living, could be justified in any such way. And, to rebuke the pride of self-righteous confidence, with emotions of holy reverence and sacred awe, he asks; *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand, who can be acquitted*†?—*Isaiah* also, though an eminent prophet and a distinguished servant of God, when he beheld Jehovah's glory and heard the seraphim proclaim his holiness, cried out; *Wo is me! for I am undone! because I am a man of unclean lips*‡. Nor was his consternation removed, or his conscience relieved, till pardon, through

* Job. xl. 4. and xlii. 6. and ix. 20, 21, 30, 31, 32.

† Ps. cxliii. 2. and cxxx 3. ‡ Isa. vi. 2, 3, 4, 5.

the atonement, was applied to him in a figure ||.

Now, is it *prudent*, or can it be *safe*, for you to trust in your own imperfect duties, when persons of such eminent character and exalted piety, made such acknowledgments and had such views of themselves and their own attainments? If *their* personal obedience would not bear the divine scrutiny, what a wretched figure must *yours* make before the heart-searching God? If Jehovah *charge his angels with folly*, and if *the heavens be not pure in his sight*; *what, then, is man, who drinketh iniquity like water*, that he should pretend to be *clean*? or *the son of man that he should presume to be righteous*? For, between human obedience and angelic holiness, there is no more comparison, than between a clod of the field and the sun in the firmament. *Vain man would be wise, though he is born like a wild ass's colt*: proud man would be righteous, though loathsome with sin and obnoxious to ruin.—But, however highly the self-sufficient may think of their own obedience, the sinner, whose conscience is pressed with a sense of guilt, and every real christian, will deprecate

|| Isa. vi. 6, 7.

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an appearance before their final Judge, in their own righteousness. The man who is taught of God, will ardently cry ; “ Hide me, “ ye rocks! cover me, ye mountains! yea, “ rather let me lose my existence, than appear before the Most Holy in the filthy “ rags of my own duties; or in any righteousness but that which is perfect, in any “ obedience but that which is divine.”

C H A P. VII.

Of Grace, as it reigns in our Adoption.

THOSE whom God has justified and admitted into a state of reconciliation with himself, he has also adopted for his *children*: that they might enjoy all the blessings of grace, and the unknown riches of glory; not only by the favour of friendship, though that be of the noblest kind; but also by an indisputable *right of inheritance*, which right they have in virtue of *Adoption*.

The word *adoption* signifies that act, *by which a person takes the child of another man, not related to him, into the place, and entitles him to the privileges of his own son*. In the *Grecian* and *Roman* states, it was customary for a man of wealth, in default of issue from his own body, to make choice of some person upon whom he put his name; requiring him to relinquish his own family, never to return to it again, and to proclaim him publickly his heir. The person thus adopted was legally entitled to the inheritance, upon the decease of his adopter; and though before he was entirely void of all claim to such

a benefit, or any expectation of it, was invested with the same privileges, as if he had been born an heir to his benefactor †.—That spiritual and divine adoption, about which we treat, is, *God's gracious admission of strangers and aliens, into the state, relation, and enjoyment of all the privileges of children, through Jesus Christ*: according to that glorious promise of the new covenant; *I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty* *.—Reconciliation, justification, and adoption, may be thus distinguished. In *reconciliation*, God is considered as the sovereign Lord and the injured party, and the sinner as an enemy to him. In *justification*, our Maker sustains the character of the supreme Judge, and man is considered as a guilty criminal standing before his tribunal. In *adoption*, the Source of all mercies appears as a father, and the apostate sons of *Adam* as aliens from him; as belonging to the family of satan, and denominated *children of wrath*. In reconciliation we are made *friends*, in justification we are pronounced *righteous*, and in adoption we are constituted

† Mr. VENN's *Complete Duty of Man*, p. 470, 471.
Ed. 2. 2 Cor. vi. 18.

bairs, and have a declared right to the eternal inheritance.

That believers are the children of God, the scriptures expressly declare. And they may be so called, as they are *begotten* and *born* from above; as they stand in a *marriage-relation* to Jesus; and as they are *adopted* into the heavenly family. These different ways, in which the divine oracles speak of their filial relation to God, are intended to aid our feeble conceptions when we think upon the grand, ineffable blessing; one mode of expression supplying, in some degree, the ideas which are wanting in another.—To express the original of spiritual life, and the restoration of the divine image, we are said to be *born* of God. To set forth in the liveliest manner, our most intimate and delightful union with the Son of the Highest, we are said to be *married* to Christ. That we might ever remember the misery of our natural condition, as a state of alienation from God, and at the same to intimate to us our title to the heavenly patrimony, we are said to be *adopted* by Him.—The condition, therefore, of all believers, is most noble and excellent. Their high *birth*, their divine husband, and everlasting inheritance, loudly proclaim

claim it. The beloved apostle was so amazed at the love and the grace, manifested in the privilege of adoption, that he could not forbear crying out with astonishment and rapture; *Bebold! what manner of love the Father bath bestowed upon us, that we should be called THE SONS OF GOD!* Here grace reigns. The vessels of mercy were predestinated to the enjoyment of this honour and happiness before the world began. The great Lord of all chose them for himself, chose them for his children, that they might be *heirs of God, and joint-heirs of Christ.* This he did, not because of any worthiness in them, but of his own sovereign will. As it is written, *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace*.* *According to the good pleasure of his will;* this is the eternal source of the heavenly blessing. *By Jesus Christ;* this is the way of its communication to the sinner. *To the praise of his glorious grace;* this is the design and the end of bestowing it.

The persons adopted, are sinners of *Adam's race;* such who, considered in their natural

* Eph. i. 5, 6.

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state, are estranged from God, and guilty before him; under sentence of death, and obnoxious to ruin. Their translation, therefore, out of this most abject and deplorable condition, into a state and relation so glorious, is an instance of reigning, triumphant, boundless grace. That the children of wrath should become the inheritors of glory, and the slaves of the devil be acknowledged as the free-born sons of Jehovah; that the enemies of God should ever be adopted into his family, and have an indefeasible right to all the privileges of his children; are astonishing to the last degree. Our character and state, by nature, are the most indigent, wretched, and abominable; such as render us fit for nothing, after this life, but to dwell with accursed fiends and damned spirits, in the most miserable abodes of darkness and despair. But, by the privilege of adoption, we rightfully bear a character, and are brought into such a state, as render us fit to associate, with saints in light, with angels in glory. What but grace, the very riches of grace, omnipotent reigning grace, could be sufficient to effect so noble, so astonishing, so divine a change?

If we take a cursory view of those invaluable privileges which the saints enjoy by adoption,

adoption, and of which they are heirs, our ideas of the superlative blessing will be still heightened.—They have the most honourable *character*, for they are called, not merely the servants, or the friends, but *the sons of God*. This dignified character is unalterable; for the Lord himself declares, that it is *an everlasting name that shall not be cut off**. If *David* so highly esteemed the character of *son-in-law* to an earthly king †; how much more should believers esteem the title of *the sons of God*; of Him, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords? They are also called *kings* and *priests*, and are represented under a rich variety of august and venerable titles, obvious to every intelligent reader of the sacred writings.—The dignity of their *relation* is immensely great. For, being the children of God, Jehovah himself is their *father*, and Christ acknowledges them for his *brethren*. Nor do they stand in relation to Jesus merely as brethren; they are also his *bride*. Their conjugal relation to Him is such, that nothing can be conceived more honourable, or more beneficial. For *He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely*. When *Da-*

* Isa. lxiii. 2. and lvi. 5.

† 1 Sam. xviii. 23.

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vid, though not yet in possession of the crown, sent his men to *Abigail* to take her to wife; that discreet widow bowed *herself on her face to the earth*, and said; *Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord*†. And may not the believer, for infinitely greater reasons, with gratitude and astonishment adore that beneficent hand, which broke off his yoke of basest vassallage, and joined him to *David's* Antitype, the heavenly bridegroom; joined him in a marriage-covenant that shall never be broken, in a union that shall never be dissolved?

Again: Believers being the children of God, are the objects of his paternal affection and unremitting care. As a father, He guides them by his counsel and guards them by his power. Their disobedience he visits with a rod of correction; and, in all their distresses, he feels for them with the bowels of parental compassion. In all his dealings with them he manifests his love, and causes all things to work together for their good.— Yes, they are the darlings of providence, and the charge of angels. Those ministering spi-

† 1 Sam. xxv. 40, 41.

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rits, who are active as flame and swift as thought, encamp around them; and, in ways unknown to mortals, subserve the designs of grace in promoting their best interests.

Further: Nothing can exceed the riches and excellency of that *inheritance* to which they have a right, in virtue of their adoption; that eternal inheritance, which is bequeathed to them by an irrevocable testament. This testament, recorded in the sacred writings, was confirmed by the blood and death of Jesus. The inheritance includes, all the blessings of grace here, and the full fruition of glory hereafter. Yea, even the blessings of *providence* are theirs and are dispensed to them, so far as infinite wisdom sees necessary to their real temporal good, their spiritual welfare, and the glory of God. For *godliness bath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come: and, their heavenly Father knoweth that they have need* of his providential favours, so long as they continue in their present imperfect state. So that, whether they be things temporal, spiritual, or eternal; whether they be things present, or things to come; all, *all* are theirs. According to that admirable text; *All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,*

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or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; ALL are yours*. But, what is still more emphatical, and the highest that words can express, the utmost our ideas can reach; the divine Spirit declares, that they are HEIRS OF GOD, and JOINT-HEIRS OF CHRIST †. Each, therefore, has a right to say; “ Jehovah himself is my portion, my “ reward, my inheritance.” Yea, such is the mutual property which God and his people have in each other, that the inheritance is reciprocal between them. *For the portion of Jacob is the Former of all things, and Israel is the rod of his inheritance; the LORD of hosts is his name* ||. All the awful, the amiable, the adorable attributes of Deity, will appear admirable and glorious in the children of God, and be enjoyed by them to their everlasting honour and unutterable bliss; to the consummation of their sublime happiness in an eternal world. And what can the heart of man desire more? Or what good thing will God with-hold from them, for whom

* 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

† Rom. viii. 17. So Ar.

Mont. Bez. Caſtal. and many others, render the paſſage.

|| Jer. x. 16.

he gave his *Son*, to whom he gives *Himself*?

Once more: In testimony to this their sublime relation, and as an earnest of their future inheritance, they receive the *Spirit of adoption*, by which they cry, with appropriation and confidence, *Abba, Father*. The *Spirit of adoption*, as it is opposed to the spirit of bondage, is a spirit of light and liberty, of consolation and joy. He glorifies Christ in the believer's view, and sheds divine love abroad in his heart. He brings the promises to his remembrance, and enables him to plead them at the throne of grace, according to his various wants. He elevates the affections to heavenly things, and seals him, as an heir of the kingdom, to the day of redemption. Such are the privileges of God's adopted sons, in the vouchsafement of which grace *reigns*.— What a mercy might we esteem it, not to be confounded before the God of heaven! What a favour, to obtain the least indulgent regard from the eternal King! What an honour, to be admitted into his family, to occupy the place and bear the character of the meanest servant! But, to be His *adopted children*, who is the Fountain

tain of all bliss ; and His *espoused bride*, who is the Sovereign of all worlds—to have Him for our everlasting father, who is the Former of all things ; and Him for our husband, who is the object of angelic worship ; are blessings divinely rich indeed ! That sinful mortals, who may justly say to corruption, *Thou art our father* ; and to the worm, *Thou art our mother and sister*—that any such should be permitted to say to the infinite God, “Thou art our portion ; all that Thou hast and all that Thou art are ours, to render us completely happy and eternally blessed ;” is an astonishing, delightful, transporting thought ! These are blessings than which, none greater can be conceived ; none more glorious granted or enjoyed.

Let the grandees of the earth and the sons of the mighty, boast of their high birth and large revenues ; their pompous titles and splendid retinues ; their delicate fare and costly array ; still the poorest peasant, that believes in Jesus, is infinitely superior to them all. What, though they shine in silk and embroidery, or glitter in gold and jewels ; though their names be adorned with the highest epithets that mortals can bestow, while a profusion of worldly riches is poured

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into their lap ; yet they must soon, very soon, *lie down in the dust*. On a level with the meanest of mortals, the *worms shall* quickly *cover them*, and their *memory shall rot*.— But your name, O weakest of christians ! your new name is everlasting. However neglected or despised among men, it shall stand for ever fair in the book of life, for ever conspicuous in the records of Jehovah. What, though you walk in the vale of life ; though you are not pointed out, as a person of eminence, while you proceed on your pilgrimage, nor receive the acclamations of the people ; yet you are high in the estimation of heaven, nor destitute of the sublimest honours. Your praise is not of men but of God. He knows the way that you take, and points you out to angels as the object of their regard. Though you cannot boast of illustrious ancestors and noble blood ; yet, being born from above, the blood royal of heaven runs in your veins. Though you are not a favourite of the prince ; yet, like a prince, you have power with the God of *Israel*. Though ever so poor in temporals, the unsearchable riches of Christ are all your own. Though your mansion be a cobwebbed cottage ; though you have not a numerous train

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of attendants; yet the holy angels are your guard and minister to your good, while the God of glory, not only condescends to come under your lowly roof, but even to *dwell* with you. Yours is the honourable character; yours is the happy state. This is happiness, which all the wealth of the *Indies* cannot procure. This is honour, which all the crowned heads in the world cannot confer. The Lord of hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of all other glory, but this honour shall never be laid in the dust. — What a shade does it cast on every worldly distinction, to be forced to feel how very fleeting it is! How encouraging the remembrance of the durable and exalted happiness of the sons of God! *Christianity!* it is thine alone, to ennable the human mind and make it truly great. *Grace!* it is thine alone, to raise the poor from the dunghill, and the needy out of the dust. Thine it is, to number them among the princes of heaven, and seat them on thrones of glory.

And now, reader, what is *your* character? You, very probably, call yourself a *christian*. If you are so in reality, you are a child of

† M'EWEN'S *Essays*, vol. ii. p. 309, 310, 311, 312.

God, and an adopted heir of immortal glory. Do you know, then, by experience, what are the privileges attendant on such a state and connected with such a character? If not, you bear the name in vain. And, so far from being a christian, you are—how shall I speak it? can you believe it? can pride forgive it?—you are an enemy to God and a child of the devil. For these two characters, *the children of God and the seed of the serpent*, include all mankind. Consider, then, where to clasf yourself, and what is your proper name.

Are you a believer? a child of God by adoption, and an heir of eternal riches? Be careful, then, to act agreeably to your high character and exalted privileges. Let the children of this world satisfy their little minds, and be captivated by the low enjoyments and perishing vanities of the present state; but you should disdain to act upon their principles, or to be governed by their maxims. The riches of the world, which engross the cares of the covetous; the honours of the world, which are so earnestly pursued by the ambitious; and the pleasures of the world, in which the sensualist delights, you should be far from desiring. Why should you

you be discontented for the want of that which, though enjoyed in all its fullness, could not make you happy?—Equally far should you be from performing religious duties on the same principles and with the same views, as the legal moralist and selfish pharisee; which generally are, either the applause of men, or their own acceptance with God. *That* is the most abominable hypocrisy in the sight of Him who searches the heart, and stands abhorred by every generous mind; *this* is a criminal usurpation of the office of Christ, and the highest dishonour to his undertaking. For it proceeds on a supposition, that his work is either, not *perfect* in itself, or not *free* for the sinner. The *former* reflects on his power, or faithfulness, and the *latter* on his grace; both which are equally far from honouring the adored Redeemer, under his sacred and cheering character, Jesus. The children of light should act from the most generous motives, and for the sublimest end. Love to their heavenly Father and gratitude to the bleeding Saviour, should ever be the fruitful *source* of all their obedience, and the glory of the eternal God, the exalted *end*.

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Again:

Again: Are you an heir of the kingdom? You should be careful to preserve a steady conduct in the church of God and in the world. Not only to be zealous for your Father's honour, for a season; or, as we vulgarly say, by fits and starts; but maintain an uniform and consistent behaviour, through the whole tenour of your conduct. Endeavour to make it appear, that you are a *diligent servant*, as well as a *dignified son*, of God. Your practice should be, as much as possible, agreeable to your holy profession and glorious hope. Remember, that as your gracious Father and loving Husband, your glorious relatives and bright inheritance, are all above; there also should be your heart and your conversation. For though you are an heir of a kingdom, it is not of *this world*: and though you are *in*, you are not *of* the world. Nor will you have any reason to be surprised or ashamed, if the world should hate you.—
Whatsoever things are true; whatsoever things are honest, grave, or venerable; whatsoever things are pure; whatsoever things are lovely; whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, the children of God undoubtedly ought, above all others,

others, to *think on these things.* For no man can free himself from the odious charge of being a dishonour to Christ and a reproach to his christian profession, if he live under the dominion of sin, and be a servant of satan. Such a person, whatever speculative knowledge he may have of the doctrine of grace, or whatever his professions of love to it may be; is destitute of the faith of the gospel, and an enemy to the cross of Christ; is a stumbling-block in the way of weak souls, and, dying in such a condition, will feel a severer vengeance, will fall under double damnation, to all eternity.

C H A P. VIII.

Of Grace, as it reigns in our Sanctification.

HAVING treated upon that *relative* change, which takes place in the state of God's people, in justification and adoption; I now proceed to consider that *real* change, which is begun in sanctification and made perfect in glory.—This real change is absolutely necessary. For though Christ is proclaimed in the gospel, as entirely free for the sinner; and though we are considered as *ungodly*, when the obedience of the righteous Jesus is imputed to us, for our justification before God; yet, before we can enter the mansions of immortal purity, we must be *sanctified*. Christ, indeed, finds his people entirely destitute of holiness, and of every desire after it; but he does not leave them in that state. He produces in them a real love to God, and delight in his ways. Hence they are called, an *holy nation*.—And as holiness is the health of the soul, and the beauty of a rational nature; as it is the brightest ornament of the church of God, and essential

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to true blessedness; so it is a subject by no means to be passed over in silence, in a treatise on *reigning grace*, for we may assure ourselves that grace reigns in it.

The vast importance of sanctification, and the rank which it holds in the œconomy of grace, appear from hence. It is the end of our eternal *election**—a capital promise, and a distinguished blessing, of the *covenant of grace*†—a precious fruit of *redemption* by the blood of Jesus‡—the design of God in our *regeneration*||—the primary intention of *justification*§—the scope of *adoption*¶—and absolutely necessary to *glorification***. So that, in the sanctification of a sinner, the great designs of all the divine operations, respecting that most glorious of all works **REDEMPTION**, are united ††.

Sanctification, therefore, may be justly denominated a *part*, a *capital* part of our salva-

* Eph. i. 4. 2 Thess. ii. 13. † Jer. xxxi. 33.
 Heb. viii. 10. Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. ‡ Eph. v.
 25, 26, 27. John xvii. 19. Tit. ii. 14. Heb. ix. 14.
 x. 10. and xiii. 12. || 1 Pet. i. 22, 23. 1 Thess.
 iv. 7. 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. § Ps. cxxx. 4. Rom. vi.
 1, 2. ¶ Eph. v. 1. 1 Pet. i. 14, 17. ** Heb.
 xii. 14. Rev. xxi. 27. and xxii. 14, 15. †† *Vid.*
 MAST. *Theol.* Tom. ii. l. 6. c. 8. § 4.

tion;

tion; and is much more properly so termed, than a *condition* of it. For, to be delivered from that bondage to sin and satan, under which we all naturally lie, and to be renewed after the image of God, must certainly be esteemed a great deliverance and a very valuable blessing. And in the enjoyment of that deliverance, and the participation of this blessing, consists the very essence of sanctification. Hence the word is used to signify, *That work of divine power and divine grace, by which they who are called and justified, are renewed after the image of the blessed God.*—The effect of this glorious work is *true holiness*. And what is holiness, but a conformity to the moral perfections of the Deity? Or, in other words, a *love* to God and *delight* in him as the chief good. *The end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart.* So to love the supreme Being, is directly contrary to the bias of corrupt nature. For as our natural depravity radically consists in our *aversion* to God, and in a setting up of something in the affections in His stead, which manifests itself in ten thousand different ways; so the essence of true holiness consists in *love* to God. This heavenly affection is the fruitful source of all obedience

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to Him, and of all delight in Him, both here and hereafter. Yea, it is not only the source of all our obedience ; but also the sum and perfection of holiness. For all acceptable duties naturally flow from the love of God ; nor are they any thing else, but the *necessary expressions* of that divine principle.

Though justification and sanctification are both blessings of grace, and though they are inseparable ; yet they are *distinct* acts of God, and there is, in various respects, a wide difference between them. The distinction may be thus expressed.—Justification respects the person in a *legal* sense, is a *single act* of grace, and terminates in a *relative* change ; that is, a freedom from punishment and a right to life : sanctification regards him in a *physical* sense, is a *continued work* of grace, and terminates in a *real* change, as to the quality both of habits and actions. The former is by a righteousness *without* us ; the latter is by holiness wrought *in* us. That precedes, as a *cause* ; this follows, as an *effect*. Justification is by Christ as a *priest*, and has respect to the *guilt* of sin ; sanctification is by him as a *king*, and refers to its *dominion*. The former deprives it of its *damning* power ; the latter of its *reigning* power. Justification is

instantaneous and *complete* in all its subjects; sanctification is *progressive* and perfecting by degrees.

The *persons* on whom the blessing of sanctification is bestowed, are such who are *justified*, and are in a state of acceptance with God. For concerning them it is said, and it is the language of reigning grace; *I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts**. The blessing here designed and the favour here promised, are, that love of God, that delight in his law and ways, which are implanted in the hearts of all the regenerate, and enjoyed by them in some degree; constantly inclining them to obey the whole revealed will of God, so far as they are acquainted with it. Sanctification is a *new covenant* blessing; and, in that gracious constitution, it is *promised* as a choice privilege, not *required* as an entitling condition.

Further: Those happy souls, who possess the invaluable blessing, and are delivered from the dominion of sin, *are not under the law*; neither seeking justification by it, nor obnoxious to its curse: *but under grace*; are

* Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12.

completely justified, by the free favour of God, and live under its powerful influence*.

—This text strongly implies, that all who are under the law, as a covenant, or are seeking acceptance with the eternal Judge by their own duties, are under the dominion of sin; whatever their character may be among men, or however high their pretences may be to holiness: And as they who are under the law have no holiness, so they can perform no acceptable obedience. For *they that are in the flesh*, in their carnal, unregenerate state, *cannot please God*. Every one that is under the law, is condemned by it; and so long as his person is accursed, his duties cannot be accepted. A man's *person* must be accepted with God, before his *works* can be pleasing to him.

To set the subject in a clearer light, it may be of use to consider; What is *essentially necessary* to a good work. To constitute a *good work*, or one that is acceptable to God, it must be done from a right *principle*, performed by a right *rule*, and directed to a right *end*.—It must be done from a right *principle*. This is the *love of God*. The great

* Rom. vi. 14.

command of the unchangeable law, is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.* Whatever work is done from any other principle, however it may be applauded by men, it is not acceptable in the sight of Him who searches the heart. For *by Him* principles, as well as *actions, are weighed**.—It must be performed by a right *rule*. This is the *revealed will* of God. His will is the rule of righteousness. The moral law, in particular, is the rule of our obedience. It is a complete system of duty, and, considered as moral, is immutably the rule of our conduct. However chargeable, therefore, any work may be to him that performs it; or however diligent he may be in the performance of it; yet, if it be no where commanded by the authority of heaven, it stands condemned by that divine query; *Who hath required this at your bands?* And though it be pretended, that the love of God is the *principle*, and the glory of God the *end*, as the dupes of superstition, both ancient and modern, have generally done; yet, being no-where enjoined in our only rule of faith and practice, it is no better than *reprobate silver*, and will certainly be

* 1 Sam. ii. 3.

rejected

rejected of God*. So that, however highly the performer may please himself, or gratify his own pride, by the deed; he cannot be commended for his obedience. For where there is no command, explicit or implied, there can be no obedience; consequently, no good work.—It must be directed to a right end. This is the *glory* of the supreme Being. *Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God* †, is the peremptory command of the Most High. And as this is the end for which Jehovah himself acts, in all his works both of providence and grace; so it is the highest end at which we can possibly aim. But no man can act for so sublime an end, but he that is taught of God and fully persuaded, that salvation is *entirely* by grace; so by grace, as to be detached from all works, dependant on no conditions, to be performed by him. For till then he cannot but refer his supposed good actions principally to *self*, and the salvation of his soul. This is the highest end for which such a person can possibly act, though other and baser ends are often proposed by him. But those works which are really good, and which the holy Spirit calls

* Jer. vi. 30.

† 1 Cor. x. 31.

the fruits of righteousness; are, in the design of the performer, as well as in the event, *to the glory and praise of God* †. Now though an unregenerate man may do those things which are *materially* good, and by a right *rule*; yet none who are ignorant of the gospel of divine grace, can act from that *generous principle* and for that *exalted end*, which are absolutely necessary to constitute a good work.

To confirm the argument and illustrate the point, I would observe; that man is a fallen creature, entirely destitute of the holy image and love of God. He is so far from loving his Maker, or delighting in his ways, that he is an enemy to him. The language of those profane wretches in the book of Job, who say to God, *Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? And what profit should we have if we pray unto Him?** is the language of the heart and conduct

† Philip. i. 11.

* Job. xxi. 14, 15. I humbly conceive, that the unregenerate man's habitual forgetfulness of God, the uneasiness he feels when the thoughts of his Maker and Judge dart into his mind, and his endeavours to exclude them as unwelcome

conduct of the unregenerate man. And neither the commands of the divine law, though the strictest and purest imaginable; nor all the vengeance threatened against disobedience to those commands, can work in our hearts the least degree of real love to God the lawgiver: nor, considering ourselves as apostate creatures and under the curse, is it in the nature of things possible.^{on} For the more pure its precepts are, so much the more contrary to the bias of corrupted nature. And it is self-evident, that the rigour of its sanction can never be loved by a person obnoxious to its condemning power: consequently, the divine Lawgiver can have no share in our affections, while we continue in this deplorable condition.

Fallen man, therefore, cannot love God, but as he is revealed in a Mediator. He
~~is indeed~~ ^{is indeed} ~~an~~ ^{an} unwelcome intruder—his passion for *sinful pleasures*, and his love to *present enjoyments*—the *enmity* he has to the people of God, and his *aversion* to serious, religious, heavenly conversation—and, finally, the treatment with which the *gospel* meets in his breast; even the *GOSPEL* of saving grace, that brightest mirror of the divine perfections; are evidences of this humbling truth, and fully prove the opprobrious charge.—Is not this a striking proof, that a *divine* power, an *invincible* agency, is necessary to regenerate the soul and convert the heart?

must behold his Maker's glory, in the face of Jesus Christ, before he can love him, or have the least desire to promote his glory. And as there is no revelation of the glory of God in Christ, but by the gospel; and as we cannot behold it but by faith; it necessarily follows, that no man can unfeignedly love God, or sincerely desire to glorify him, while ignorant of the truth. But as there is the brightest display of all the divine perfections in Jesus, and as the gospel reveals Him in his glory and beauty; so, under the sacred influence of the holy Spirit, the sinner is brought to see the infinite amiableness and transcendent glory of God, in the person and work of Immanuel. The gospel being a declaration of that perfect forgiveness which is with God, and of that marvellous salvation which is by Christ, which are full, free, and everlasting; by whomsoever the gospel is believed, peace of conscience and the love of God are enjoyed in some degree. While, in proportion to the believer's views of the divine glory, revealed in Jesus; and his experience of divine love, shed abroad in his heart; will be his returns of affection and gratitude to God—as an infinitely amiable Being, considered in himself; as inconceivably

ably *beneficent* and *gracious*, to a needy, guilty, unworthy creature. His language will be, *What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me, bless his holy name!* — Being born from above, he *delights in the law of God, after the inward man*; and is habitually desirous of being more and more conformed to it, as it is a transcript of the divine purity, and a revelation of the divine will. Now he is furnished with that generous principle of action, the *love of God*. The obedience he now performs, and which God accepts, is — not the service of a mere *mercenary*, in order to gain a right to life, as a reward for his work; much less of a *slave*, that is driven to it by the fears of damnation — but, the obedience of a *child*, a *spouse*; of one who regards the divine commands, as coming from a father, an husband. Being *dead to the law*, he now *lives to God*.

I said, being *dead to the law*. This is the case of none but such as have seen their own *insufficiency*, and have received the atonement in the blood of Jesus; such who rely on His work alone, as completely sufficient to procure their acceptance with an holy God, and as satisfying to the anxious enquiries of an

awakened conscience, respecting that important affair. So the apostle, *Ye are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ. We are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held**.—In these remarkable words the believer is described as dead to the *law*, and the law as dead to *him*. By which are signified, that the law has no more power over a believer to exact obedience as the *condition of life*; or to threaten vengeance against him, in case of disobedience, than a dead husband, in a literal sense, has to demand obedience from a living wife; or, on account of disobedience, to threaten her with punishment. And that the real christian, who is dead to the law, has no more expectations of justification by his own obedience to it, than a living wife has of assistance from a dead husband. And as she can have no expectations of receiving any benefit from him, he being dead; so she cannot rationally have any fears of suffering any evil at his hand †.

But though the law, as a covenant, ceases to have any demands on *them that are in Christ Jesus*; yet it ceases not, as a *rule of conduct*, and as in the hand of Christ, to the

* Rom. vii. 4, 6.

† Rom. vii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

most

most experienced believer, or advanced saint. Nor, thus considered, is it possible that it should be deprived of its authority, or lose its use. For it is no other than the rule of that obedience, which the nature of God and man and the relation subsisting between them, render necessary. So that to suppose the law vacated, in this respect, is to suppose that relation to cease which has ever subsisted, and cannot but subsist, between the great Sovereign and his dependant creatures, who are the subjects of his moral government. Nor, thus considered, are its commands burdensome, or its yoke galling, to the real christian. He approves of it, he *delights in it, after the inward man.* For, as a friend and a guide, it points out the way in which he is to manifest his thankfulness to God for all his favours; and the new disposition he received in regeneration, from his Law-fulfiller, inclines him to pay it the most sincere and uninterrupted regards. And the obedience he now performs, is in *newness of Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter* *.

Should any pretenders to holiness, the genuine offspring of the ancient pharisees, ob-

* Rom. vii. 6.

ject, that *by faith we make void the law*, our answer is ready: *God forbid! Yea, rather, we establish the law*, both by the *doctrine* and principle of faith.—By the *doctrine* of faith. For we teach, that there is no salvation for any of the children of men, without a perfect fulfilment of all its righteous demands. This, though impossible to a fallen enfeebled creature, was punctually performed by *Messiah the surety*; which, being placed to the account of the believing sinner, renders him completely righteous. Thus the law is so far from being made *void*, that it is *honoured*; it is magnified, and that to the highest degree. The *obedience* performed to the preceptive part of the law, by a *divine Redeemer*; and the sufferings of an *incarnate God* on the cross, in conformity to its penal sanction; more highly honour it, than all the *obedience* which an absolutely innocent race of creatures could ever have yielded; than all the *sufferings*, which the many millions of the damned can endure to eternity.—By the *principle* of faith. For as it purifies the heart from an evil conscience, by the application of atoning blood, so it works by *love*; love to God, his people and his cause, in some measure conformably to the law, as the rule of righteousness.

righteousness. Hence it is that they who believe, are said to be *sanctified by that faith which is in Jesus*.—If any one, therefore, pretend to believe in Jesus, to love his name, and enjoy communion with him, who does not pay an habitual regard to his commands; he *is a liar, and the truth is not in him*. For our Lord says, *If a man love me he will keep my words.* And He informs us, that the reason why any one does not *keep his sayings*, is, because he *does not love Him*, whatever he may profess to the contrary *. That is no love, which is not productive of obedience; nor is that worthy the name of obedience, which springs not from love. Pretensions to love without obedience, are glaring hypocrisy; and obedience without love, is mere slavery.

The great and heavenly blessing of sanctification, is the fruit of our *union* with Jesus. In virtue of that union which subsists between Christ as the head, and the church as his mystical body, the chosen of God, in their several generations, become the subjects of regenerating grace, and are possessed of the Holy Spirit. According to those emphatical and instructive words: *Without me,*

† *Acts xxvi. 18.*

* *John xiv. 23, 24.*

without a vital union with me, similar to that of a living branch to a flourishing vine; *ye can do nothing* that is truly good and acceptable in the sight of God †.—It is by the Spirit of truth and the word of grace, that any sinner is sanctified. As it is written, *Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit* *. Hence we read, of the *sanctification of the Spirit*; of the *holiness of truth*; and, of being *sanctified by the truth* ||. By comparing these passages together it is evident, that the divine Spirit, the grand *agent*, makes use of the gospel-truth, as the appointed *instrument*, in producing that holiness in the heart and life of a christian, which is included in the blessing and signified by the term, *sanctification*. For this reason it is that our great Intercessor prays, *sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth*. And asserts, *Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you* †.

The truth of the gospel is that mirror in which we behold, the gracious designs of God respecting us; the all-sufficiency and glory of Christ, together with his finished salvation wrought out for the guilty. Be-

† John xv. 5. * 1 Pet. i. 22. || 1 Pet. i. 2.
2 Thess. ii. 13. Eph. iv. 24. John xvii. 19. † John
xvii. 17, and xv. 3.

holding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord; we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.—As the countenance of *Moses*, after his familiar converse with *Jehovah*, shone with such dazzling radiance, that the chosen tribes could not steadily behold it; so the believer, viewing *Jesus* the King of glory in his matchless beauty, derives a likeness to the glorious object of his views and his love. For, the more frequently he beholds Him, the more fully he knows his perfections, of which his holiness is the ornament. The more he knows them, the more ardently he loves them. The more he loves them, the more he desires a conformity to them; for love aspires after a likeness to the beloved. The more he loves the transcendently amiable *Jesus*, the more frequently, attentively, and delightfully will he behold him. And thus he obtains, by every fresh view, a new feature of his Lord's most glorious image §.—Hence it appears, that our advances in true holiness, will always keep pace with our views of the glory of Christ. Or, in other words, that a life of holiness to the honour of Christ, as our King and our God; will always bear an exact proportion

to a life of faith upon him, as our Surety and Saviour.

And as the word of grace is the proper warrant and ground of faith, the more clear our conceptions are concerning its truth and certainty, the more firmly shall we confide in it; consequently, the fruits of holiness will more abundantly adorn our conversation. For the gospel *brings forth fruit, in all them that know it in truth*: and it is by the *exceeding great and precious promises* contained in it, that we are made *partakers of a divine nature*. —Hence the gospel is compared, by an infallible author, to a *mould*, into which melted metals are cast; from which they receive their form and take their impression. *God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that type of doctrine, into which ye were delivered**. As the gospel of peace is the doctrine here designed, and as it is according to godliness; so they who receive impressions from it, must, in proportion to its heavenly influence, have their tempers and conduct conformed to the law of God, as the rule of righteousness.—Thus the truth becomes effectual, through the

† 2 Pet. i. 4. Col. i. 5, 6.
the original reads.

* Rom. vi. 17. So

agency

agency of the Holy Spirit, to produce that purity of heart, which is the *health* of the soul; and those good works in the life, which are the only *ornament* of a christian profession.

And as all the ordinances of grace are calculated to increase our knowledge and love of Christ; so they are adapted to promote the work of sanctification. Whether, therefore, they be those of the closet or the family; whether public or private; they ought, by all means, to be conscientiously observed, by all who profess themselves the disciples of the holy Jesus. And all who attend upon them in faith, shall certainly find them the happy means of promoting their knowledge of the true God, their growth in grace, and advancement in real holiness.

We may now consider the principal *motives*, which are used in the book of God, to stir up the minds of believers to seek a larger enjoyment of the blessing of sanctification, and to abound in every good work. These motives are various, yet all evangelical.—Believers are exhorted to obedience, from the consideration of their distinguishing characters, as *the elect of God*, and *a peculiar people**.—

* Col. iii. 12, 13, 14. 1 Pet. ii. 9.

The *purchase* which Christ has made of his chosen, and the unequalled *price* which he paid for their deliverance, afford a charming, a constraining motive, to be holy in all manner of conversation. The price with which they were bought, being nothing less than *blood*, the infinitely precious blood of Jesus, the incarnate God* ; a remembrance of it should kindle in the hearts of all the redeemed, the most fervent glow of heavenly gratitude, and elevate them to a pitch of seraphic devotion. And this more especially when they reflect on that abject slavery and miserable state, in which they were viewed by the Lord their Redeemer, when he undertook their cause and laid down his life for them.—In the sufferings of Christ on the cross we behold, in the same point of view, the tenderest compassions of his heart towards perishing souls ; his invariable, intense regards to the rights of his Father's righteous, but violated law ; and the concern which he had for the honour of his divine government. Considerations these, most happily calculated to mortify our lusts, and quicken our graces ; to

* Acts xx. 28. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

make

make us loathe sin and love the law, as being *holy, and just, and good.*

Here we see the tenderest compassion to our *perishing souls*, expressed in a way superior to all the power of language ; superior to all finite conception. This He expressed—be astonished, ye inhabitants of the heavenly world ! and let all the redeemed of the Lord, be transported with holy wonder, and filled with adoring gratitude !—this He expressed, in *tears and cries, in groans and blood.* Consider Him, O believer ! loaded with reproaches by his enemies, deserted by his friends, and forsaken even by his God—Consider him in these circumstances of unparalleled wo, and see whether it will not fire your heart with holy zeal, and arm your hands with an heavenly resolution, to crucify every lust, to mortify every vile affection.—Did *Hannibal*, by the command of his fathet, swear at the altar, to maintain an irreconcilable enmity against the *Romans* ? So, methinks, should the christian, when standing, as it were, at the foot of the croſs, and beholding the sorrowful sufferings of his Saviour upon it, swear to maintain a perpetual opposition against every lust and every sin. Here he will form his steadiest resolves, to enter into

into no alliance, to admit of no truce, with those enemies of his soul and murderers of his Lord. Such a consideration, set home by the blessed Spirit, will be instead of a thousand arguments to persuade, instead of a thousand incentives to prompt, to a cheerful obedience. *Paul* was so struck with a view of this wonderful love, and the righteous claim which Jesus has to every heart, that he accounted a want of love to him the highest pitch of ingratitude and wickedness; and boldly pronounced the state of such to be accursed to the last degree ‡.

Here we behold the Redeemer's love to his Father's *law*, and the superlative regard he had to the honour of his *divine government*. For though he was determined that the rebels should be saved from deserved destruction; yet, rather than the least reflection should ever be cast on the violated law, as though its precepts were unreasonable, or its sanction cruel; he Himself would *obey*, he Himself would *bleed*. By which procedure he pronounced, in the most emphatical manner, that the law, in its precepts, is entirely *holy* and *good*; and, in its sanction, perfectly *just*. And at the same time demonstrated,

‡ 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

how

how justly they who die under its curse, are punished with everlasting destruction.—Reflect upon this, believer, and see whether it will not prove a noble inducement, to labour and strive after a more perfect conformity to its holy precepts, in all your tempers, words, and actions; in all that you are, and in all that you do. Then you will see, that as your Lord, out of love to your soul and in honour to the law, refused not to *die* the most infamous and accursed death for your salvation; you are laid under the strongest obligations, to love his name and reverence the law; to confide in his atonement, and imitate his example.

Further: When the christian considers that his whole person is the object of redeeming love, and the purchase of Immanuel's blood; when he reflects, that the end designed by this purchase is, that he *should serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life*; and that he *should live to Him who died for him and rose again*: beholding such a deliverance, by such stupendous means, and for such a glorious end; he will cry out with *Ezra*, on an infinitely less important occasion; *Seeing that thou, our God, hast given us such deliverance as*

*as this, should we again break thy commandments?** The heart that is not moved to love the Redeemer and glorify his name, by such considerations as these, must be harder than stone, and colder than ice; must be entirely lost to all sense of gratitude.—Were believers more fully acquainted with the love of a dying Saviour, and the infinite efficacy of his atoning blood; their dependance on him would be more steady, and their love to him would be more fervent. And, were this the case, how patient would they be under all their afflictions; how thankful in all their enjoyments; how ardent in all their devotions; how holy in all their conversation; how useful in all their behaviour? Yea, how peaceful, how joyful, in the prospect of death and a future world? Then would their lives be happy indeed.—The purchase made and the price laid down by the holy One of God, is, therefore, a noble, a constraining motive to holiness of life.

Their *calling* is another consideration made use of to the same purpose †. *As He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.* The christian should

* Ezra ix. 13, 14.

† Eph. iv. 1. 1 Thess. ii. 12.

often

often meditate on the nature and excellencies of his high, holy, heavenly calling. By it he is translated *out of darkness into marvellous light*; and from under the *power of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son*. By it he is brought out of his natural state, which was a state of wrath and alienation from God, into a state of peace and communion with him. And the *end* of his calling is, that he *might be holy*; that he might shew forth the praises of his infinite Benefactor here below, and finally attain his kingdom and glory in the upper world †.—How great the blessing itself! How gracious, how glorious, the design of God in bestowing it! The remembrance of this, must necessarily have a tendency to holiness, in every heart that is in the least acquainted with it.

The *mercies* of God in general, and more particularly that special mercy manifested in the *free pardon* of all their sins, and the everlasting justification of their persons, constitute the noblest attractive of the heart ‡. An attractive of sovereign efficacy, to draw forth all the powers of their souls, in the way of cheerful obedience to the ever-merciful God.

† 1 Thess. iv. 7. 1 Pet. ii. 9.

‡ Rom. xii. 1.

That *forgiveness which is with* our Sovereign, and the manifestation of it; far from being an incentive to vice, causes them to fear and reverence, to love and adore Him *.—The state of believers, as not being *under the law*, is considered and improved to the same excellent purpose. *Sin shall not have dominion over you.* On what is this positive assertion grounded? Is it because they are bound to obedience, on pain of incurring the curse of a righteous law; or on the dreadful peril of suffering eternal damnation? Far from it. The reason assigned, which ought ever to be remembered, is; *For ye are not under the law, but under grace* †. Here grace is described as having the dominion. Here grace reigns. This consideration the apostle applies, as a powerful motive to holy obedience.

The *filial* relation which believers stand in to God, and their *hope* of the eternal inheritance, constitute another motive to answer the same important end ‡. The inspired writers frequently take notice of that sublime relation, to remind them of the dignity and privileges attending it, and to excite them to

* Ps. cxxx. 4.

† Rom. vi. 14.

‡ Eph. v. 1.

Philip. ii. 15.

a suitable conduct. And, surely, the children of God should act from nobler principles, and have more elevated views, than the slaves of sensuality and the servants of sin. The consideration of their heavenly birth, their honourable character, and infinite inheritance, must animate them to walk as becomes the citizens of the new *Jerusalem*, and the expectants of an eternal crown.—The *indwelling* of the Holy Spirit, together with the safety and comfort of believers, which, in various respects, arise from it; are considered and urged for their advancement in holiness*. The absolute necessity of his abiding presence with the people of God, is no small inducement not to grieve the sacred Inhabitant, by a loose and careless conversation.

The *promises*, which *are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus*; those *exceeding great and precious promises*, which relate both to this world and that which is to come; are improved, as a further motive, to induce the children of God to press forward after all holiness of heart and life †. The apostle *Peter*, as before observed, considering their tendency

* 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. Eph. iv. 30.

† 2 Pet. i. 4.

2 Cor. vii. 1.

and design, scruples not to affirm, that it is *by them*; by their influence on the soul, that we are *made partakers of a divine nature**. These glorious promises, are great as the heart of man can wish or conceive; I was ready to say, great as Jehovah himself can make.

Once more: The consideration of those *chastisements* with which the Lord, as a father, corrects his children, when remiss in their duty and negligent in the practice of good works; is another motive to stir them up to follow after holiness, and to make them watchful against the incursions of temptation †. I said, with which the Lord, as a father, *chastises*; not *punishes*. For it is the property and the business of a tender *father*, to correct his children, when disobedient; but of a *judge* and an *executioner*, to pronounce a person worthy of punishment and to inflict it: which, in the proper sense of *punishment*, makes no part of the divine conduct towards the heirs of glory. And when their heavenly Father does chastise them; which is, not merely to demonstrate his sovereignty, but to correct for faults com-

* 2 Pet. i. 4.

† Ps. lxxxix. 30, 31, 32.

mitted;

mitted; he does it, not in wrath, but in love. Yea, he does it *because* he loves them, in order to *make them partakers of his holiness*, and that *they may not be condemned with the world* *. This being the design of God in chastising his people, and the severest chastisements being a fruit of his paternal love; though the means be grievous, yet they are salutary, and the end is glorious. Correct them he will, but not disinherit them. He will make them smart for their folly, but he *bates putting away* †. According to that declaration; *If his, the Messiah's children, forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, or his seed, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail* ‡.—And as the Lord corrects his children, when disobedient; so he reveals more of his love to them, as they walk on steadily in the paths of duty. And such who maintain the closest communion with him, and most punctually obey his com-

* Heb. xii. 5—11. 1 Cor. xi. 32.

† Mal. ii. 16.

‡ Ps. lxxxix. 30, 31, 32, 33.

mands, have reason to expect, richer manifestations of his love; to live more under the smiles of his countenance; and, consequently, to be more joyful in their pilgrimage here on earth, having larger foretastes of future glory*. While such of his people who backslide more frequently, and are not so careful to perform his will; come oftener under his correcting hand, and their comfortable communion with him is more interrupted.

This motive, it must be confessed, is of a less generous kind, than those before mentioned. Notwithstanding, in the present imperfect state, it has its use. Nor is it destitute of the love of God. For though the redeemed of the Lord, fear the frowns of their Father's face, and the lashes of his correcting rod; yet they do not live under the flavid apprehensions of eternal wrath, nor are they kept in the way of duty, by the tormenting fears of that awful punishment. And though they may justly expect more copious manifestations of their Father's love, as they walk in obedience to him; yet they do not obey *for life*, or to gain a right of inheritance.

* John xiv. 21, 23.

No; they are already heirs. They are not only servants, but *sons*; and are possessed of a filial affection for Him who has *begotten them to a lively hope*.—Though the motive, therefore, be not so free, and pure, and noble, as those before mentioned, which are taken from blessings already conferred; yet it favours of the love of God, and has respect to his glory. And the obedience performed under its influence, is of a kind very different from all the duties of the most zealous moralist, that is unacquainted with salvation by grace. Notwithstanding it must be granted, that the more pure our regards are to the glory of God, the more perfect is our obedience, and the more acceptable in the sight of our heavenly Father. Yet far be it, that we should once indulge the thought of our duties, when performed to the utmost of our ability, being accepted of God for their *own sake*! The acceptance with which they meet, at the hand of God, is not because they are *perfect*, or we *worthy*; but in consequence of our *union* with Christ, and the justification of our *persons* in him. And these duties, being the fruits of holiness, are produced by virtue of a vital union with Him; are considered as evidences of that union; and ac-

cepted through Him, as our great high-priest before the throne—Accepted, not to the justification of our persons, but as a testimony of our love and gratitude, and of our concern for the glory of God.

I am far from asserting, that these are *all* the motives to obedience, with which the scriptures furnish believers, and which they ought to keep in their view; but they, I conceive, are some of the *principal*. And if these have their proper influence upon them, they will be *neither idle nor unfruitful, in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It is evident, from the foregoing paragraphs, that sanctification is a *part*, an *important* part of that salvation and blessedness, which are promised to the people of God, and provided for them in Christ. Be careful then, reader, to look upon it and seek after it, under its true character. Be diligent in the pursuit of holiness, not as the *condition* of your justification; but, as the brightest *ornament* of a rational nature; as that in which you make the *nearest approaches* to the image of the blessed God; and as that by which you bring the *highest honour* to his name. In this the perfection of your intellectual powers consists,

consists, and glory is its genuine result.— The children of God should always remember, that though holiness and good works give them no title to life, for that is the prerogative royal of divine grace, through the Mediator's work; yet an higher, and still higher degree of holiness, is to be sought with all assiduity. It being their proper business, as well as their great blessing, while they walk in Christ the way; by holiness and good works to evidence themselves to be in him, and so free from all condemnation.

It also appears, that as no obedience is acceptable to God, but that which proceeds from a principle of love to his name, and is done with a view to his glory; and as no man is possessed of that heavenly principle, or capable of acting for that exalted end, but the true believer and justified person: so it must be very preposterous and entirely unavailing, to exhort sinners to do this or the other good work, in order to *gain an interest* in Christ; or, as a *preparatory qualification* for justification by him. For an interest in Christ and the covenant, is not *acquired* by the sinner, but *freely given* of God; and is a primary fruit of eternal, distinguishing love. Nor

are

are the best works of an unbeliever, any other than splendid faults; are neither good in themselves, nor acceptable to God. Till we receive the atonement which is by Christ, and that forgiveness which is with God; all our duties spring from a *slavish* principle, and are referred to a *selfish* end.—“Without this,” says Dr. *Owen*, “all that you do, however “it may please your minds, or ease your “consciences, is not at all accepted with “God. Unless this foundation be laid, all “that you do is lost. All your prayers, all “your duties, all your amendments, are an “abomination to the Lord. Until peace is “made with him, they are but the acts of “enemies which he despiseth and abhorreth. “You run, it may be, earnestly; but you “run out of the way; you strive, but *not lawfully*, and shall never receive the crown.— “True gospel-obedience, is the fruit of the “faith of forgiveness. Whatever you do “without it, is but a building without a “foundation; a castle in the air. You may “see the order of gospel-obedience, *Eph.* ii. “7—10. The foundation must be laid in “*grace; riches of grace* by Christ, in the free “pardon and forgiveness of sin. From hence “must the works of obedience proceed, if “you

“ you would have them to be of God’s appointment, or find acceptance with him. “ Without this, God will say of all your services, worship, obedience, as he did to the *Israelites* of old, *Amos* v. 21—25. *I despise all, reject it all*; it is not to him, nor to his glory. If you have not received the atonement in the blood of his Son; if you are not made partakers of forgiveness; if your persons are not pardoned, all your duties are accursed.”

Hence it is evident, that as it is the gospel of reigning grace, under the agency of the divine Spirit, which produces true holiness in the heart, and furnishes the christian with such excellent and multiplied motives to abound in obedience; this glorious truth is absolutely necessary to reform the world—Necessary to be known, *experimentally* known, that we may please God, or answer any valuable purposes in a holy conversation. For the gospel only can furnish us with such principles and motives to obedience, as will cause us to take delight in it. When we know the truth, as it is in Jesus; then, and not till then, *the ways of Wisdom will be ways*

* Dr. OWEN on the 130 Psalm, p. 266, 267.

of pleasantness to us. Then faith will *work by love*, *real* love to God and our neighbour.

Be it, therefore, your concern, believer, to keep in view the many engaging inducements to holiness, with which the book of God abounds and proposes to your notice. Always considering it, as your indispensable duty and proper business, to glorify God by an holy, heavenly, useful conversation. Remember, you *are not your own*: *you are bought with a price*: your whole person is the Lord's. And as nothing is a more powerful persuasive to holiness, than the consideration of the love of Christ and the glory of God, manifested in the atonement made on the cross; let it be the subject of your frequent meditation. For the cross, and the work finished upon it, exhibit the brightest view of the divine perfections.—Endeavour, then, to obtain clearer views of Jehovah's glory, and of your reconciliation to him by Jesus Christ; and you will have a greater abhorrence of all sin, and be more abased in your own eyes. Contemplate the bitter sufferings which Jesus underwent, not only for your good, but in your stead; and you will be pained at the heart on account of your past trans-

transgressions and present corruptions*. The more you are acquainted with that divine philanthropy, which was manifested in the redemption of your soul from the pit of destruction; the more will it constrain you, to love and adore, to live to and glorify, the Lord your Redeemer†. For as the love of God, displayed in the Mediator, proclaimed in the gospel, and experienced by faith, is that which first fixes our affections on him; so the more we view it, the more will our love be heightened. And as love to God is a principle of universal obedience, consequently, the more it is heightened, the more will it influence our minds and conduct in every respect.—Thus grace, that very grace which provided and brings salvation; is the master which *teaches*; is the motive which *induces*, and the sovereign, in the heart of a believer, that sweetly *constrains* him to deny himself, and to walk in the ways of holiness‡.

* Zech. xii. 10. † 2 Cor. v. 14. ‡ Tit. ii. 11, 12.

C H A P. IX.

*Of the Necessity and Usefulness, of Holiness
and good Works.*

HAVING considered the nature of sanctification; the character and state of those happy souls who enjoy the blessing; the way in which they come to possess it; and the many cogent motives, used by the Holy Spirit, to engage believers in the pursuit of holiness and the practice of virtue; I shall now proceed to shew the *necessity* of holiness, and the various *important purposes* which are answered by the performance of good works.

The love of God being implanted in the heart of a sinner in regeneration, fits the soul for spiritual communion with the great Object of all religious worship, in his ordinances and with his people in the church below; and for an higher and more perfect communion with Him and his saints in the world of glory. In this fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, with which believers are indulged in the present state; and in that more noble and intimate fellowship with God, enjoyed by the spirits

spirits of the just made perfect above, true happiness consists, both in time and eternity. —But the unregenerate heart, the unsanctified soul, is absolutely incapable of such refined delights. They can neither be desired nor relished by it. While a man continues in his natural state, at enmity with God and in love with sin; he neither has, nor can have any real pleasure in approaching his Maker in any way. *Two cannot walk together except they be agreed.* Hence it is that our Lord says; *Except a man be born again, he CANNOT see the kingdom of God.* With whom the apostle agrees, when he so confidently affirms; *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord* †.

That holiness which the scripture so expressly requires in order to the enjoyment of God, is possessed by every one that is born from above, and in a justified state. For every subject of regenerating grace, loves God. The love of God being a principle of holiness, and the source of all acceptable obedience; none can enjoy it and not be possessed of *holiness*; *real holiness*, in some degree. Yea, we may venture to assert, that

† John iii. 3. Heb. xii. 14.

whoever

whoever loves the infinitely Amiable, is possessed of all that holiness, in the principle, that shall at any time flourish and adorn his future conversation, or shine in him to all eternity. Such an one, therefore, must not only have a *title* to heaven, but also a *meetness* for it.

Some professors, who espouse the notion of sinless perfection, and look upon themselves as uncommon friends to the interests of holiness; talk, indeed, of persons being in a regenerate and justified state, while they are yet *unsanctified*. Consequently, quite incapable of having communion with God, in his ordinances here; entirely unfit for the sublime enjoyments of the heavenly world hereafter; and, therefore, if they leave the present state in such a situation, everlasting misery must be their portion.—But, as the doctrine of sinless perfection in this life, is a bold contradiction to the testimony of God, and opposite to all christian experience; so this imagination is equally false and uncomfortable. For, either they mean the same things by the terms, *regenerate* and *justified*, which the scripture does, or they do not. If not, what they say is nothing at all to the purpose; and, therefore, unworthy of a moment's

a moment's regard, whatever may be their meaning. But if by these expressions they intend the *same* things which the Holy Spirit does, in the volume of infallibility; then it is evident, from the tenour of divine revelation, that they labour under a great mistake. For what is intended by the *justification* of a sinner, but a declaration of the eternal Judge, pronouncing a person righteous according to law, and freed from every charge? What is implied in the *regeneration* of a sinner, but a communication of spiritual life, and the restoration of the image of God in man? Now is it possible that a person should be regenerate and justified; that he should stand clear in the eye of the law, and be viewed by Omnipotence as possessed of spiritual life and bearing his Maker's image; while he is yet unsanctified and has no meetness for glory? There is no such flaw in the blessing of justification, nor any such imperfection in the state of a regenerate person; as to leave him at such a distance from the enjoyment of the eternal inheritance. We are not, in order of *time*, first renewed by the Spirit of truth and justified by an imputed righteousness, in virtue of which we are entitled to glory;

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while

while yet we remain entirely destitute of holiness, or a capacity of enjoying eternal bliss, for which we must labour and strive in hopes to attain it at some future period. For, being freed from the curse of the law and entitled to all blessedness; we are the members of Christ; in a new state, and live a new life—Possessed, both of a *right* to glory and a *meetness* for it, at the same time, though not by the same means.

And, as *holiness of heart* is absolutely necessary to communion with God and the enjoyment of him; so *holiness of life*, or an external conformity to the divine revealed will, is highly useful, and answers various valuable purposes in the christian life; the principal of which I would now consider.—By an obedience to the commands of God, we evidence the *sincerity* of our holy profession. By this our faith is declared *genuine* in the sight of men; who have no other way to conclude that it is unfeigned, but by our works. And whoever pretends to believe in Jesus, and does not walk in good works; his faith is worthless, barren, dead *.—By a good conversation, in which our light shines before

* Jam. ii. 18. Eph. ii. 10.

men;

men; we *edify* our brethren, *silence* opposers, and preserve the gospel from those *reproaches*, which would otherwise be cast upon it, as a licentious doctrine*.—An exemplary conduct, in a christian professor, has often been owned of God and made happily useful, in *convincing* the ignorant and removing their prejudices against the truth; so as to make them impartial enquirers after it, and, frequently, of *winning* them over to an approbation of it†.—By walking in the paths of duty, we also express our *gratitude* to God for his benefits, and *glorify* his holy name; which is the great end of all obedience ‡.

Once more: The works of faith and labours of love which believers perform, *will be remembered* by Jesus the judge, at the last and great day of accounts. Those, especially, which are done to the poor, despised members of Christ, and for his sake §. These will be mentioned, at that awful time, as fruits and evidences of their union with Christ and love to him. Then they will distinguish the real christian from the open profligate and mere formalist; from all who were punctual

* 1 Pet. ii. 15. and iii. 16. 1 Cor. vi. 3. † 1 Pet. iii. 12. and iii. 1. § Matt. xxv.

in the performance of a round of duties, which cost them nothing ; which raised their religious character among men, and exposed them to no shame or suffering ; but backward, exceeding backward, to part with their unrighteous *mammon* for the support of the cause of God, or to assist the poor and the persecuted members of Christ.—These are the principal of those *necessary uses* †, for which good works are to be maintained.

It is, notwithstanding, carefully to be observed ; That neither our external obedience, nor inherent holiness, constitute any part of that righteousness by which we are justified. Neither the one nor the other is the *cause*, or *condition*, of our acceptance with God. For, as before observed, that righteousness by which we are justified, must be absolutely perfect. But our personal obedience is greatly defective, even in the best of men and in their most advanced state, while in the present life. So that if God were to enter into judgment with us, on the foot of our own holiness or duties, we could none of us stand in the awful trial. Our holiest tempers would be found far short of that perfection which the

† Tit. iii. 14.

law requires; and our best duties could not answer for themselves, much less atone for our past transgressions. For *all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*: and we have need of an high-priest *to bear the iniquity of our holy things*.— For, who among mortals dare say to the omniscient God, “Search and “try this or the other duty performed by “me; thou shalt not, on the strictest examination, find any *defilement* cleaving to it, “nor any sinful *defect* attending it?” Who dare add, “I am willing to risque my soul’s “eternal salvation on its absolute perfection, “after such an exact scrutiny made?” The boldest heart must tremble at such a thought; nor dare the most upright make the solemn appeal, or venture his immortal ALL on such a foundation.

Hence the great teacher of the *Gentiles*, who was a most eminent saint, notwithstanding all his extraordinary gifts, his useful labours, exemplary conduct, and painful sufferings, for the cause of truth and the honour of his divine Master; utterly disclaimed all pretensions to *personal* worthiness. And, when taking a prospect of the awful tribunal, earnestly desired to be found in *Christ*; not having his own *righteousness*,

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which was of the law ; consisting in his own holiness and righteous deeds ; but that which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness of God by faith †. This obedience alone can support our hope and comfort our hearts, when we think of standing before Him who is a consuming fire. It is that righteousness alone, which was wrought out and finished before we had a being, which is the only ground of our full discharge before our final Judge ; of all our comfort and all our joy, as to that grand affair.—So that if any person solicitously enquire, How shall I appear before my Maker ? the answer is, In the obedience of Jesus, which is perfect in itself and entirely free for the guilty. But if the enquiry be, How shall I express my thankfulness to God for his benefits and glorify his name ? then the answer evidently is, By living in a conformity to his revealed will ; and by devoting myself, all that I am and all that I have, to his honour and service.—Thus provision is made, in the œconomy of grace, for the believer's peace and joy, by a direct view of the finished work of Christ ; and for the exercise of every virtue, the performance of every duty, whether religious

† Philip. iii. 9.

or moral, and all for the noblest end, even the glory of the blessed God.

From hence it is manifest, that though our good works are of no consideration at all, in the article of justification, or in obtaining a title to life; yet they are highly necessary on many other accounts. And it is an affair of the last importance, to be rightly acquainted with the proper uses of good works and obedience. Otherwise, we shall inevitably run into one of those opposite and fatal extremes, *Arminian* legality, or *Antinomian* licentiousness. The *former* will wound our peace, infringe on the honours of grace, and exalt self. The *latter* will turn the grace of God into wantonness, fear the conscience, and render us worse than infidels avowed. We should, therefore, be exceeding careful rightly to distinguish, between the *foundation* of our acceptance with God, and that *superstructure* of practical godliness which must be raised upon it.

Let us once more hear the judicious *Owen*. Speaking to this point he says;

“ Our *foundation* in dealing with God, is
“ Christ alone; mere grace and pardon in
“ him. Our *building* is in and by holiness
“ and obedience, as the fruits of that faith

“ by which we have received the atonement. And great mistakes there are in this matter, which bring great entanglements on the souls of men. Some are all their days laying of the *foundation*, and are never able to build upon it to any comfort to themselves, or usefulness to others. And the reason is, because they will be mixing with the foundation, stones that are fit only for the following building. They will be bringing their *obedience, duties, mortification of sin*, and the like, unto the foundation. These are precious stones to build with, but unmeet to be first laid to bear upon them the whole weight of the building. The foundation is to be laid, as was said, in *mere grace, mercy, pardon in the blood of Christ*. This the soul is to accept of, and to rest in, merely as it is *grace*; without the consideration of any thing in itself, but that it is sinful and obnoxious unto ruin.—This it finds a difficulty in, and would gladly have something of its own to mix with it: it cannot tell how to fix these foundation-stones, without some cement of its own endeavours and duty. And because these things will not mix, they spend a fruitless labour

“ bour about it all their days.—But if the
“ foundation be of *grace*, it is not at all of
“ *works*; for otherwise *grace* is no more
“ *grace*. If any thing of our *own* be mixed
“ with *grace* in this matter, it utterly de-
“ stroys the nature of *grace*, which if it be
“ not *alone* it is not at all.

“ But doth not this tend to licentiousness?
“ Doth not this render obedience, holiness,
“ duties, mortification of sin, and good works
“ needless? God forbid! Yea, this is the *only*
“ way to order them aright unto the glory
“ of God. Have we nothing to do but to
“ *lay the foundation*? Yes, all our days we
“ are to build upon it, when it is surely and
“ firmly laid. And these are the means
“ and ways of our edification. This, then,
“ is the soul to do, who would come to
“ peace and settlement. Let it let go all
“ former endeavours, if it have been en-
“ gaged in any of that kind. And let it
“ alone receive, admit of, and adhere to mere
“ *grace*, mercy, and pardon, with a full
“ sense that in itself it hath nothing for
“ which it should have an interest in them;
“ but that all is of *mere grace* through Jesus
“ Christ.—*Other foundation can no man lay.*
“ Depart not hence until this work be well
“ over.

“ over. Surcease not an earnest endeavour
“ with your own hearts, to acquiesce in this
“ righteousness of God, and to bring your
“ souls into a comfortable persuasion that
“ God for Christ’s sake, hath freely forgiven
“ you all your sins. Stir not hence until this
“ be effected. If you have been engaged in
“ any other way; that is, to seek for the
“ pardon of sin by some endeavours of your
“ own; it is not unlikely but that you
“ are filled with the fruit of your own do-
“ ings: that is, that you go on with all
“ kinds of uncertainties, and without any
“ kind of constant peace. Return, then,
“ again hither. Bring this foundation-work
“ to a blessed issue in the blood of Christ;
“ and when that is done, up and be do-
“ ing*.”

It is greatly to be feared, that the distinction, so judiciously pointed out in the preceding quotation, is but little known or considered, even by many who are earnestly concerned in a religious profession. And it is undeniably plain, that there are great numbers that call themselves *christians*, who, as they know nothing in reality concerning

* Dr. OWEN on the 130 Psalm, p. 307, 308.

Christ;

Christ; so, in their conduct, they are more like incarnate *devils* than real *saints*.—Nor are there a few, that perform a round of duties very exactly, and have an high opinion of their religious profession; who, notwithstanding, are far from possessing that holiness, and performing those good works, which are essential to the christian character. View them in their respective places of worship, and in the performance of devotional duties; you see them assume a serious air, as though they were greatly concerned about their everlasting welfare. See them in their families and in the common concerns of life, there they are full of levity; unsavoury and loose in their conversation.—Some of these pretenders to religion, will also attend that seminary of vice and profaneness, the *playhouse*, and other amusements of this licentious age, as far as their circumstances in life will permit. You may see them vain and extravagant in dress and show, while their poor christian neighbours of the same religious community, with all their industry, are hardly able to acquire decent cloathing. Nor need we wonder if these sons of carnal pleasure put them off, with a “Be ye warmed.”—They will be lavish enough at their own tables,

tables, while the poor among the people of God are ready to famish by their side; and, such is their love to Christ and his members, they will think it an instance of great condescension if they vouchsafe to visit them and say, "Be ye filled."

Or, if these pretenders to piety be naturally of a more grave and serious disposition, view them in their trade and business; there you will find them covetous, griping, and oppressive; making it their chief aim to lay up great fortunes for their children and dependents, and to raise their families in the world. These, like their forefathers, *for a pretence make long prayers*; even when, by usury, extortion, and oppression, they *grind the faces of the poor, and devour widows houses*. They lay up that in their coffers, which of right belongs to the needy who labour under them; the rust of which shall be a swift witness against them another day, and *shall eat their flesh, as it were fire*.* Is not the gospel dishonoured, is not the church plagued, by such professors, such sanctified wretches as these?—Such persons, whether more light in their disposition and conduct, or more

* James v. 3, 4.

grave in their temper and behaviour, are alike the children of the devil and the slaves of sin ; are on a level, in the sight of God, with the most profane. As to the covetous, those votaries of *Mammon*, whatever dislike they may have to their associates, they stand ranked in the book of God with no other company, than *extortioners and thieves, drunkards and adulterers*. Yea, they are branded with the most detestable character, for they are called *idolaters*.

The sin of *covetousness* is, I fear, greatly misunderstood and much overlooked by many professors. Were it not, the remark would not be so often made ; “ Such a person is a *good christian*, but a *covetous man*.” Whereas it might with as much propriety be said ; “ Such a woman is a *virtuous lady*, but an *infamous prostitute*.” For the *latter* is not more contrary to sound sense, than the *former* is to the positive declarations of God, recorded in the scripture.—When we hear people in common talk about covetousness, we are tempted to look upon it as a merely trifling fault. But, when we turn over the volume of heaven, we find it pronounced *idolatry*, and deemed a *capital crime* ; while
Jehovah

Jehovah denounces damnation against the wretch that is guilty of it *.

In what, then, does this aggravated sin consist? I answer, *Covetousness*, in the language of inspiration, *is the desire of having more*; the desire of obtaining, or increasing in, wealth †. Whoever, therefore, is *habitually desirous* of riches, is, in the estimate of heaven, a *covetous man*; whatever his station in life, or profession of religion may be. The language of the covetous heart is that of the horse-leech's daughters, *Give, give*. The covetous man is always desirous of *more*, whether he has little or much. And, if a professor, he will always find some pretext, to hide the iniquity of his idolatrous heart. But, however such a professor may cover his crime under plausible pretences of any kind; or however safe he may imagine himself, as being a member of a visible church, and free from her censure; the time is coming when the mask shall be stripped off, and then it shall be fully known where his affections have been, and what God he has served. Then it

* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Eph. v. 5. Col. iii. 5. Ps. x. 3.

† $\Pi\lambda\epsilon\omega\epsilon\xi\alpha$.

shall plainly appear, whether JEHOVAH, or *Mammon*, swayed his affections and ruled in his heart.—Perhaps there are few sins for the practice of which, so many excuses are made and plausible pretences urged, as that of *covetousness*, or a love of the world: consequently, there are few sins against which professors have greater occasion to watch. It was not, therefore, without the greatest reason, that our Lord gave that solemn caution to all his followers; *Take heed, and beware of COVETOUSNESS* *.

We

* Luke xii. 15.—None will suppose, from what I have just asserted, that I mean to encourage *idleness* or *extravagance*. No; far be it! Such who, through indolence or pride, luxury or prodigality, waste their substance and fail in the world, can hardly be too severely censured. They not only impoverish themselves, but injure their neighbours; and are no other, than the *pests* of society and *public robbers*.

The reader, I presume, will not be displeased, if I present him with a quotation on this subject, from my worthy and honoured friend, Mr. *Henry Venn*.—“ It is remarkable,” says he, “ that the covetousness against which we are so earnestly warned in God’s word, is not of the *scandalous* kind; but such as may govern the heart of a man, who is esteemed very virtuous and excellent by the world. In the tenth *Psalm* the covetous, whom the Lord is there said to *abhor*, are the very persons of whom

“ the

We may, therefore, conclude, that though
the absolute freeness of Christ, as exhibited
in

“ the wicked *speak well* : which could never be the case,
“ did their love of money make them either villainous in
“ their practice, or miserably penurious in their temper ;
“ for men of this stamp none commend.—The same thing
“ is observable in that solemn caution given by our Re-
“ deemer ; *Take heed, and beware of covetousness.* By
“ which it is evident He meant no more, than a rooted
“ persuasion that the comfort of life consists in abundance,
“ and desiring, from such a persuasion, to be rich : this
“ was the covetousness our Lord condemns. And, that
“ his admonition might sink the deeper, He represents
“ the workings of that avarice which He condemns, in a
“ case which passes every day before our eyes. It is this :
“ A man grows rich in his business, not through fraud or
“ extortion, but by the blessing of God upon his labour
“ and skill. As is usual, he is highly delighted with his
“ success ; he exults in the prospect of being master, in
“ a few years, of an independent fortune ! In the mean
“ time, he is determined to be frugal and diligent, till he
“ takes his final leave of business, to enjoy all the sweets
“ of ease and splendor, *Luke xii. 19.*—Now, where are the
“ people, governed by the common maxims and principles
“ of human nature, who see any thing the least to blame
“ in this man’s sentiment or conduct ? Who do not applaud
“ and imitate it themselves ? Yet this very man our Lord
“ sets before our eyes, as the picture of one engrossed by a
“ covetous desire of the things of this world. This very
“ man He represents as summoned, in the midst of all his
“ golden hopes, to appear a most guilty criminal at the bar
“ of

in the gospel to the worst of sinners, must be maintained with confidence; yet we are bound

“ of his despised Maker. Lo! this is the man whom our
“ Lord exposes, as a miserable wretch for all others to take
“ warning by and resist covetousness. So, such a fool and
“ such a finner as this, *is he that layeth up treasure for*
“ *himself*; that is, every earthly-minded man, who seeks
“ after wealth, as if it was the foundation of happiness;
“ *and is not rich towards God*; rich in faith, hope and ho-
“ lines, *Luke xii. 21.*

“ St. Paul, in perfect harmony with his Lord, forbids
“ the desire of wealth as a criminal effect of avarice. *Let*
“ *your conversation be without covetousness, and be content*
“ *with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will*
“ *never leave thee nor forsake thee, Heb. xiii. 5.* And
“ where, instead of this self-denied temper, a desire of in-
“ creasing in wealth is cherished, there snares, defilement
“ and ruin, are declared to be the certain consequences.
“ For *they that will* (the original signifies the simple desire)
“ *be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many*
“ *foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction*
“ *and perdition.* For the love of money is the root of all
“ evil: which while some have coveted after, they have
“ erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with
“ many sorrows, *1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.*—If it should be said,
“ Do you mean then to affirm, that it is wrong for any man
“ to arise to a state of great wealth? The scripture, I an-
“ swer, condemns only the *desire* of riches and the *passion*
“ for them, as defiling and sinful. Therefore, if whilst
“ your whole heart is given to God, he is pleased to prosper
“ whatever you take in hand, and to give you an abundant

bound to affirm, with equal assurance, that he who pretends to faith in Jesus, and does not habitually live under the benign influence of the love of God and the love of his brother, *for the truth's sake* — that he who does not manifest this heavenly affection, by a suitable conduct, has no right to call himself a *christian*, nor ought to be acknowledged as such.

“ increase; then your wealth is evidently as much the gift of God, as if it came to you by legacy or inheritance. “ It is God's own act and deed to call you up, who was “ content to sit down in a low place, to an higher point “ of view, and to intrust you with more talents, to improve “ them for his glory. Now the difference between pos- “ sessing wealth, thus put into your hands, and *desiring to* “ *grow rich*, is as great as that between a worthless, am- “ bitious intruder into a place of honour, seeking nothing “ but his own base interest; and a man sought out for “ his worth, and invested with the same office, for the “ public good. And those who can see no material, no “ necessary distinction in the two cases, are already blinded “ by the love of money.” *Complete Duty of Man*, p. 389, 390, 391, 392. 2d Edit.

C H A P. X.

*Of Grace, as it reigns in the Perseverance of
the Saints to eternal Glory.*

FROM the preceding chapters it appears, that the state of believers, whether considered as *relative* or *real*, in their justification, adoption, and sanctification, is highly exalted; and that the privileges attending it, are of incomparable excellence and infinite worth. In each of these particulars it has also been proved, that *grace reigns*; that the exceeding riches of grace are manifested.

Notwithstanding, the believer who knows himself, will be ready still to enquire, with the greatest solicitude; “How shall I *persevere* in this happy state? by what means “shall I attain the desired end? What provision has the God of all grace made, that “I may not, after all, come short of the “wished-for bliss? Grace, I thankfully acknowledge, has done great things for me: “to reigning grace I own myself unspeakably obliged. But if grace, as a sovereign, “does not still exert her power, I not only

“possibly may, but certainly shall, finally mis-
“carry.”—Thus will every christian con-
clude, when he considers the number and
power, the malice and subtilty, of his spiri-
tual enemies, compared with his own inhe-
rent strength to resist them. For the world,
the flesh, and the devil, are combined against
him. These, in their several ways, assault
his peace and seek his ruin. These attempt,
in various forms, to cause him to wallow in
the mire of sensuality, as the filthiest *brute* ;
or to puff him up with pride, as *Lucifer*. By
insinuating wiles, or open attacks ; with the
craft of a serpent, or the rage of a lion, they
endeavour to compass his ruin. And, alas,
how small his strength, as he is in himself,
to resist and overcome ! The corruption of
nature, even in the regenerate, renders the
believer’s desires after that which is good, too
often exceeding languid, and enervates all his
moral powers. His frames are fickle and un-
certain to the last degree ; nor can he, with
safety, place the least confidence in them.

This humbling truth is exemplified, in a
very remarkable manner, in the case of *Peter*.
He said with confidence, *Though all men be
offended because of Thee, yet will I never be of-
fended. Though I should die with Thee, yet
will*

will I not deny Thee. But, alas! in a very little while his frame of mind is altered. His courage fails. His pious resolutions and steadiest purposes, hang their enfeebled heads. So that, notwithstanding his boasted fidelity, he cannot watch with Christ so much as *one hour*, though there be the greatest necessity for it. He is brought to the trial, and, like *Samson*, his locks are shorn; his supposed strength is gone. He trembles at the voice of a silly maid; and, shocking to think! denies his Lord with dreadful oaths and horrid imprecations.—Such are the inherent abilities of those, who are to fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Such are the best of saints, considered in themselves.

And can these unstable and impotent creatures, ever expect to persevere and attain eternal life? Can they, who know not how to trust their own hearts for a moment*; whose strength, in a comparative view, is mere weakness; who are surrounded continually with the most crafty, powerful, and unwearyed adversaries; rationally expect a complete victory and an everlasting crown? Yes; these very persons *can do all things*

* Prov. xxviii. 26. Jer. xvii. 9.

through Christ strengthening them. God can enable even a *worm* to *thrash* the mountains. They shall not only come off victorious, but be *more than conquerors* over all their enemies.—Nor can this appear strange, or in the least incredible, when it is considered, that *Grace*, omnipotent **GRACE reigns**—That the *love*, the *power*, the *wisdom*, the *promises*, the *covenant*, and *faithfulness* of God—that all the divine *Persons* in the eternal Trinity, and every *perfection* in the Godhead, are concerned in their preservation and engaged to maintain it.

The *love* of God is engaged for their everlasting security. Having chosen and appointed them to life and happiness, as a primary fruit of his eternal love; his love must *abate*, or his purpose be rendered *void*, before they can finally fall. But, if the *Lord of hosts* *hath purposed*, *who shall disannul it?* If his *hand* be *stretched out*, to execute his designs, *who shall turn it back*, before he has accomplished the end he determined? As He *thought*, *so shall it come to pass*; and as He *purposed*, *so shall it stand**.—Nor shall his *love* to their persons ever *abate*. For He

* Isa. xiv. 24, 27.

rests,

refls, He takes the highest complacency, *in* the exercise of *his love*, and in all its favoured objects. Yea, his delight in his people is such, that *He rejoices over them with singing*, and takes a divine pleasure in doing them good*. His love is unchangeable as himself, and unalterably fixed upon them. Consequently, though the manifestations of it may vary, yet, while infinite wisdom is capable of directing, and almighty power of executing his gracious purposes towards them, they shall never perish.—Agreeable to which, we hear the apostle exulting in the views of God's immutable love. Affirming, that nothing in the *heights* above, nor any thing in the *depths* beneath; nothing *present*, nor any thing *future*, should be able to *separate him from it* †.

The *power* of God is also engaged, on the behalf of all those who are *begotten again to a lively hope*. They *are kept by it*, as in a garrison, *through faith to salvation* ‡. His power surrounds them, as a wall of fire, to be their protection and the destruction of their adversaries ||. Omnipotence itself is their shield,

* Zeph. iii. 17. Jer. xxxii. 42. † Rom. viii. 38, 39.
‡ 1 Pet. i. 2, 3, 4. || Zech. ii. 5.

and keeps them night and day *.—And, as omnipotence is their guard, so omniscience is their guide; the honour of divine *wisdom* being concerned in their preservation. For if a regenerate soul, one that had been rescued out of satan's hand, were finally to fall into his snare and perish for ever; it would argue, if not a want of *power* in God to maintain the conquest, yet a change of resolution; and so would bring no honour to the *wisdom* of his first design. It is no reputation to the *wisdom* of an artificer to suffer a work, in which he determined to manifest inimitable contrivance and exquisite skill for ages to come, and upon which his affections were placed; to be dashed to pieces before his eyes, by an inveterate enemy, when he had power to prevent it. Now the scriptures inform us, that in the œconomy of redemption, the *wisdom* of God is peculiarly concerned, and in the most wonderful manner displayed. In it divine *wisdom* is greatly diversified. Jehovah abounds in all *wisdom and prudence*, in forming the stupendous plan, and in choosing the most suitable means to attain the wonderful end. But if any of the chosen, redeemed

* Isa. xxvii. 3.

and called, were to be finally miserable, how would this appear?

The *promises* of God, those *exceeding great and precious promises*, which are made to his people, afford them strong consolation respecting this matter. He has declared, that he will *confirm them to the end, and preserve them to his kingdom*. That the *righteous shall hold on their way, and grow stronger and stronger*; that they *shall never depart from him, but fear him for ever*; that, as they are in his hand and in the hand of Christ, they shall never be plucked thence, either by force or fraud; and, consequently, *shall never perish*. Yes, the blessed God has repeatedly and solemnly declared, that *He will never, no never leave them, nor forsake them*. And the reason is, not because they are *worthy*, or any way better than others; but for the glory of his own eternal name, and because he has chosen them to be his peculiar people. No, *the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make them his people**.—These promises, with

* 1 Cor. i. 8. 2 Tim. iv. 18. Job xvii. 9. Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Deut. xxxiii. 3. John x. 28, 29. Heb. xiii. 5. 1 Sam. xii. 22.

many more to the same purpose, *are yea and amen*; are made and unalterably confirmed, *in Christ Jesus*. Divine faithfulness is pledged in them, and infinite power is engaged to perform them. These promises—let the christian exult in the cheering thought!—these promises were made by Him that cannot lie; to which he has annexed, amazing to think! his most solemn *oath*. With this professed design, that every sinner, who *flees for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him*, *might have strong consolation*. Now the promise and oath of God, being two immutable things, must ascertain the believer's final happiness.

Jehovah's *covenant* with his people in Christ, affords another glorious attestation to the comfortable truth. That covenant, which is *ordered in all things*; which is stored with heavenly promises, replete with spiritual blessings, *and absolutely sure*; that covenant of peace which shall never be removed runs thus: *And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not*

*not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me**.—Here the stability of the covenant is asserted in the strongest terms. And concerning it we may observe; That it is of a kind entirely different from that which was made with our great progenitor *Adam*; the condition of which was perfect obedience, and the promise of life was suspended on that condition. It is also very different from that which was made with the people of *Israel* at *Sinai*; which, being broken by them, was abrogated by the Lord himself. The language of this is *testamentary*. It consists of absolute promises, requires no condition to be performed by man, and is perpetual. Here that sovereign Being who cannot lie, declares in the strongest manner, that they who are included in this covenant *shall not depart from him*, and that he will *never cease to do them good*. Security greater than this, is not to be conceived, nor can be had.—And, indeed, it would be absurd to suppose, that God should make a *new* and *better* covenant than that which he made with *Adam*, or with *Israel* at *Sinai*; a cove-

* Jer. xxxii. 38, 39, 40.

nant without conditions to be performed by man; a covenant which displays rich goodness and boundless grace; and that, after all, the covenantees should be as liable to the dreadful forfeiture of life and happiness, as our first father, when under the covenant of works. Nay, if the new covenant had been *conditional*; if our perseverance and immortal happiness had depended on our performance of any condition, whether greater or less; our state, as believers, would have been infinitely more hazardous, than *Adam's* was, while in innocence, under the covenant of works: because of the very great disparity between that state of *uprightness*, in which he was created; and ours of *corruption*, into which we are fallen. Perfect obedience was easier to him, than the least possible condition would be to us.

The *faithfulness* and inviolable *veracity* of God, give further assurance of the saint's perseverance. The rocks, though of adamant, shall melt away; the everlasting mountains shall be removed out of their places; yea, the whole terraqueous globe itself shall entirely disappear; but the *faithfulness* of God in executing his covenant, and the *veracity* of God in performing his promises, are

are unchangeable and eternal. *The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you and keep you from the destructive power of every evil.* And He has declared, that he *will not suffer his faithfulness to fail.* Yea, He has *sworn by his holiness*, by the glory of all his perfections, that he will be faithful to his covenant and promises, respecting Christ and his seed. So that, if there be immutability in the purpose of God; if any stability in his covenant; if any veracity in his promises, the true believer shall certainly persevere.—Rejoice, then, ye feeble followers of the Lamb. The basis of your confidence and consolation is strong indeed. Stronger than all the troubles of life; stronger than all the fears of death; and stronger than all the terrors of approaching judgment. Why should you not dismiss every slavish apprehension, when the God of power and the God of truth, has made such ample provision for your deliverance from every evil you had any reason to fear, and the enjoyment of every blessing you ought to desire, whether in this or a future world?

† 2 Thess. iii. 3. Psal. lxxxix. 33, 34, 35.

Again:

Again: The *merit* of the Redeemer's blood, his *intercession* for his people, and *union* with them, strongly argue their final preservation, and heighten their assurances of it.—The *merit of his blood*. For, is it probable that He who so loved them, as to give his life for their ransom; that He who suffered such tortures of body and horrors of soul in their stead; that He who drank the very dregs of the cup of wrath, on purpose that joy and bliss might be their portion for ever— is it probable, I say, that He should ever suffer them who are, in the most emphatical sense, his *peculiar*, his *purchased people* and his own property, to be taken from him by craft or power, and that by the most abhorred of beings and his greatest enemy? Such a supposition is very absurd. Such an event would be highly injurious to the Saviour's character.—What, will not He who underwent so much for them in the garden and on the cross; who bore the curse and suffered the very pains of hell in their stead, even while they were *enemies*; protect them now they are become, by converting grace, his *friends*? Why was He willing to be at such an amazing expence in their purchase, if, after all, he permit their avowed enemy

to

to make them his easy prey? That be far from him! The thought be far from us! No; while he has compassion in his heart, or power in his hand; while his name is JESUS, and his work salvation; he must *see of the travail of his soul, and be completely satisfied.* It cannot be that one soul for whom he gave his life and spilt his blood; whose sins he bore and whose curse he sustained, should ever finally perish. For if that were the case, divine justice, after having exacted and received the debt, at the hand of the *Surety*, would make a demand on the *principal*; in other words, would require double payment.—Besides, the *faithfulness* of Christ to his covenant-engagements, is greatly interested in the everlasting happiness of all the redeemed. For we cannot forget who it is that says; *I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me, I SHOULD LOSE NOTHING, but should raise it up again at the last day*†. Now if Jesus, to whom the elect were given and by whom they were redeemed, became respon-

sible for them to the Father at the last day, as his own declarations import; were he not fully to execute the divine will, in raising up *all* that were committed to his care, he would (I speak it with reverence) fail in the performance of his own engagements. Consequently, either his *power* or *faithfulness*, would be impeached; the supposition of which is absurd, and the assertion is blasphemy.

The *intercession* of Christ for his people before the throne, affords another evidence of this glorious truth. This intercession is founded on his *perfect atonement* for all their sins: and it is a firm foundation for that purpose. So that, notwithstanding all the accusations of Satan lodged against them; notwithstanding all their weakness and all their unworthiness; the intercession of Jesus the Son of God, of Jesus Christ the righteous, must afford them the highest security. For, *their Redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is his name, he shall thoroughly plead their cause* †. And as every believer is interested in this intercession, so Jesus, the advocate, is never denied in his suit*. His plea is always valid, and always effectual to

† Jer. I. 34.

* John xvii, 20, and xi, 42.

the

the end designed : which is, as he expressly informs us, *that their faith fail not* ; and, that they may be *preserved from evil* *.—Our ascended Redeemer is not, in this part of his mediatorial undertaking, like a *mere petitioner*, who may or may not succeed ; for he has a previous right to all the blessings he solicits on their behalf. He can *claim* them, in virtue of the promise made to him and his spiritual seed, having fully performed the conditions of the everlasting covenant, as their representative. Yes, believer, the *compassion* of Him who bled on the cross, and the *power* of Him who pleads on the throne, ascertain your final felicity.

That spiritual and ineffable *union*, which subsists between Christ and his saints, involves the truth for which I am pleading, and clearly evinces the important point. For, as every believer is a member of that mystical body of which He is the head ; so, while there is life in the *head*, the *members* shall never die, neither by the wiles of craft, nor the assaults of power. For He who rules over all, for the good of the church, declares concerning his people ; *Because I*

* Luke xxii. 32. John xvii. 11, 15.

live, ye shall live also. His life, as Mediator, is the cause and support of theirs ; and they are *the fulness and glory of Him who filleth all in all**. As it is written, *Christ is our life—Your life is hid with Christ in God*†. Your life is *hid* ; like the most valuable treasure in a secret place. *With Christ* ; committed to his guardianship, and lodged under his care, who is able to keep that which is intrusted in his hands. *In God* ; the bosom of the Almighty is the sacred casket, the divine repository, in which the jewel is safely kept. Cheering thought ! For Jesus, the guardian, will never be bribed to deliver up his charge to the power of an enemy ; nor shall any sacrilegious hand ever be able, by secret fraud or open violence, to rifle the casket where Jehovah lays up his jewels†. The life of believers is *bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord their God*§ ; and the bond of that union shall never be broken, the ineffable connection shall never be dissolved. For *he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit* with him ; and, therefore, absolutely inseparable ||.

* Eph. i. 22, 23. 2 Cor. viii. 23.

† Col. iii.

3, 4.

‡ Mal. iii. 17.

§ 1 Sam. xxv. 29.

|| 1 Cor. vi. 17.

Further :

Further: The *indwelling* of the Holy Spirit in believers, furnishes them with another cogent argument in proof of the joyful truth. He is *in them a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life.* As a guide and a comforter, He is given to *abide with them for ever.* His design, in their regeneration, is their complete holiness and everlasting happiness. And his gracious purpose, in taking up his residence in them, is to fit them for sublimer enjoyments; to secure their perseverance; to guard them through life, and conduct them to glory. By him they are *sealed to the day of redemption;* and He is *the earnest of their future inheritance.* Now, as an earnest is a *part* of the whole, and is given in *assurance* of enjoying the whole; and as the Holy Spirit is called the *earnest* of our everlasting inheritance; the words must import the utmost certainty of our future bliss, if possessed of this earnest. Otherwise, which would be shocking to affirm, it must be esteemed *precarious*, and not to answer the end for which it was given.

Once more: The *word* and *ordinances* of God, on which it is both the duty and privilege of believers to attend, are happily sub-

servient to the great design. By these, as through the whole, the great Agent of the covenant works in a way suited to the nature of a rational being. For though the saints *are kept by the invincible power of God*; yet not by means merely physical, but *through faith*. Whatever, therefore, is adapted to increase and confirm our faith in the great Redeemer, at the same time tends to our preservation. This the word and ordinances do.—In the divine *word*, believers have many great and precious promises to *encourage* them; many exhortations to *direct* and *animate* them, in the performance of duty; many warnings given and dangers pointed out to *deter* them from evil; many examples of suffering patience and victorious faith, for their *imitation, comfort* and *support*, whenever they come into like circumstances; and many glorious things affirmed, concerning that inheritance which God has provided for them, in order to *raise their affections* to heavenly things, and to *invigorate* their hope of eternal blessedness; all which are adapted to promote their edification, and to *preserve* them in the way of peace.—And the *ordinances* of God in general, as they are the green pastures in which the *sheep of Christ* delight

delight to feed and lie down *; being calculated to nourish their souls, and increase the vigour of their spiritual life; must be happily conducive to their preservation. By a suitable attendance on divine institutions, believers have their faith confirmed, their holiness advanced, and their hope brightened. In them they have the bread of God dispensed, by which they are nourished up to eternal life. On the appointments of heaven, therefore, it is their duty and blessing to attend: nor can they, without the highest presumption, expect preservation in the faith, while they neglect these salutary means.

Nor are the divine *chastisements* without their use, in this respect. For the children of God are chastened of their Father, *that they may not be condemned with the world* †.—On the whole, then, we have the utmost reason to conclude with *Paul*, that where-ever God begins *a good work*, *he will* certainly *perform it, until the day of Jesus Christ* ‡. For He that formed the universe, is not such an inconsiderate builder, as to lay the foundation of a sinner's complete happiness, in his own eternal purpose and in the blood of his only

* Psal. xxiii. 2.
30, 31, 32, 33, 34.

† 1 Cor. xi. 32. Psal. lxxxix.
‡ Philip. i. 6.

Son, and then leave his work unfinished. No; it shall never be said by his infernal enemies; “Here God began to build and was “not able to finish. He once loved, redeemed, “regenerated, and designed to have saved “these wretched souls. But his love “abated; his purpose altered; or, which is “more to our honour and his disappoint- “ment, we have rendered his schemes abor- “tive. And now we torment, with a ven- “geance, myriads who were once high in “Jehovah’s favour, and numbered among “his children.” But, though this be the consequence of the opposite doctrine, Lucifer himself, with all his pride and enmity, will never entertain such a thought, nor thus blaspheme his Maker.

The following quotation may serve to exhibit, in a compendious view, the substance of the foregoing paragraphs.—“Since we “stand not, like *Adam*, upon our own “bottom; but are branches of such a “vine as never withers; members of such “a head as never dies; sharers in such “a Spirit as cleanseth, healeth, and pu- “rifieth the heart; partakers of such pro- “mises as are sealed with the oath of God “—Since we live, not by our own life, “but by the life of Christ; are not led or
“sealed

“ sealed by our own spirit, but by the Spirit
“ of Christ; do not obtain mercy by our
“ own prayers, but by the intercession of
“ Christ; stand not reconciled to God by
“ our own endeavours, but by the propi-
“ tiation wrought by Christ; who loved us
“ when we were enemies and in our blood;
“ who is both willing and able to save us
“ to the uttermost, and to preserve his own
“ mercies in us; to whose office it belongs,
“ to take order that none who are given
“ unto him be lost—undoubtedly, that life
“ of Christ in us, which is thus under-
“ propped; though it be not privileged from
“ temptations, no, not from backslidings, yet
“ it is an *abiding* life. He who raised our
“ soul from death, will either preserve our
“ feet from falling, or, if we do fall, will
“ heal our backslidings and will save us
“ freely *.”

Some, perhaps, may be ready to object;
“ If the preservation of believers depend
“ upon God, in the way and manner asserted;
“ they have no occasion to be at all careful
“ how they live. No great harm can befall
“ them, for they will be sure to be safe in

* Bp. REYNOLDS's *Works*, p. 173, 174.

“the end.”—In answer to which I shall only observe; That the strength of this objection was long since tried upon our Lord himself, by the devil. And as it appeared of no force to Him, though the tempter proposed it as the necessary consequence of those promises made by the Father to Christ, as man and mediator, respecting his preservation; so it appears to have as little in the present case. The grand proposition in the devil’s argument was; If thou art the Son of God, his angels will certainly preserve thee; thou canst not be hurt. And his conclusion was; Therefore, without any danger, thou mayest cast thyself down from this eminence*.—So, in the present case, the argument contained in the objection, is; If you be a child of God and in union with Christ, your perseverance is certain. For, being the charge of Omnipotence, it is impossible you should finally fall. Therefore, you may safely bid adieu to all circumspection; you need not fear sin, or its consequences; nor is there any occasion to be solicitous about walking with God in the ways of holiness. But, as our Lord, who had not the least

* Matt. iv. 5, 6.

doubt of the special care of his Father over him, as man, rejected satan's proposal with the utmost abhorrence ; knowing that it was a temptation from beneath, and the argument used to inforce it an abuse of the scripture : so the believer, though he is fully persuaded that grace reigns in every part of his salvation ; and though it appears, in a striking light, in that special care of God, which is incessantly exercised over him in his perseverance to eternal life ; yet he is well aware, that he is not to continue in sin that *grace may abound*. And, upon every such suggestion, he will from his heart say ; *God forbid!*—Besides, there are many very important purposes answered, by walking in the ways of obedience, respecting the christian himself, his neighbour and his God ; which, having been considered already, I shall not here particularly mention.

Nor ought it to be objected against the security of the people of God, for which I am pleading ; “ That the saints are exhorted to “ pray for the continual aids of grace ; for “ divine support, in times of trial, and for “ protection against their enemies ;” as if it argued their state uncertain, as to the final event.

event. For Christ, who was absolutely sure of happiness, nor could possibly fail of enjoying the reward which was promised to him, as Mediator ; or come short of possessing that glory which he had with the Father before the world was ; yet prayed for it with as much fervour, as any saint can possibly do for the most desirable blessing *. A noble example this, of the assurance of faith, respecting our eternal state, and of an entire reliance on the divine promises, perfectly consistent with earnest and constant prayer for the fulfilment of them !

But, notwithstanding the Lord, as the Covenant-God of his people, has engaged that they shall not perish eternally ; yet, as he has nowhere engaged that they shall not fall into sin, and as sin is provoking to the eyes of his holiness ; they ought to use the utmost caution, lest, by disobedience, they move him to use the scourge. For the frowns of a father will be hard to bear, and their spiritual peace and joyful communion with him will be much impaired, by such disobedience and chastisement for it.—The children of God,

* John xvii. 1, 5. Compare 2 Sam. vii. 27, 28, 29. Dan. ix. 2, 3.

when

when careless in their walk and guilty of backslidings, have frequently and severely smarted under his correcting hand. The sorrowful confessions and bitter complaints of *David*, after his scandalous intrigue with *Uriah*'s wife, are a standing, incontestible proof of the truth of this observation. Their persuasion of interest in the everlasting covenant has been terribly shaken, if not lost for a season, so as to wound their hearts with the keenest anguish. Till at length, after many prayers and great watchfulness, they have been again indulged with the smiles of Jehovah's countenance, and the joys of his salvation *.—The consideration of this, together with a remembrance, how God the Father and his incarnate Son are *dishonoured*; the Holy Spirit *grieved*; the glorious gospel *reproached*; weak believers *offended*; and the hands of the wicked *strengthened*, by the careless conduct of christian professors; afford a sufficient reason for those multiplied cautions, which are given to the disciples of Christ in the book of God, that they indulge not any carnal or criminal passion in the least degree; without supposing, that their final happiness

* Ps. li. 8, 12. and lxxxix. 30, 31, 32.

depends

depends on the steadiness of their walk, or the goodness of their conversation. For our perseverance in faith and holiness, depends on the excellency of our *state*; as being in covenant with God, his adopted children, and the members of Christ; not upon our *obedience* and *strivings*.

Hence you may learn, believer, that as the enemies of your soul are various and inveterate, subtle and powerful, and your spiritual frames inconstant; it is highly necessary you should live under a continual remembrance of these humbling considerations. What more advisable, what so necessary for you, as to walk circumspectly; to watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation? An humble sense of your own weakness and insufficiency, should ever abide on your mind and appear in your conduct. And as the corruption of nature is an enemy, that is always near you and always in you, while on earth; and ever ready to open a door to temptation from without; you ought to *keep your heart with all diligence*. Watch, diligently watch, over its imaginations, motions and tendencies. Consider whence they arise and to what they incline, before you execute any of the purposes formed in it. For such is the superlative deceitfulness

ceitfulness of the human heart, *that he who trusteth in it is a fool* *; ignorant of his danger, and unmindful of his best interests. This consideration should cause every child of God to bend the suppliant knee, with the utmost frequency, humility and fervour; to *live*, as it were, at the throne of grace, nor depart thence till out of the reach of danger. And, certain it is, that the more we see of the strength of our adversaries, and the danger we are in from them; the more shall we exercise ourselves in fervent prayer.—And can you, O christian, be cool and indifferent, be dull and careless, when the world, the flesh, and the devil, are your implacable and unwearied adversaries? Dare you indulge yourself in carnal delights, or a slothful profession, while the enemies of your peace and salvation are ever active and busy in seeking to compass your fall, your disgrace, and, if possible, your eternal ruin? *Awake thou that sleepest!* Mistake not the field of battle for a bed of rest. Be sober; be vigilant.

Again: Are there, notwithstanding the believer's weakness and the power of his enemies, such strong assurances given, of his

* Prov. xxviii. 26. Jer. xvii. 9. Prov. iv. 23.

perseverance, complete victory, and final happiness? then, though with fear and trembling he ought to reflect on his own insufficiency, he may rely on a faithful God, as his unerring guide and invincible guard, with confidence and joy. The remembrance of *that*, will be a constant motive to humility and watchfulness. The exercise of *this*, will maintain peace and consolation of soul; will be an inexhaustible source of praise, in spite of all the attempts of inveterate malice in his most enraged foes. For the Almighty himself says, *Fear not: I am thy shield, and will for ever defend thee; and thy exceeding great reward, to render thee completely and eternally happy**. While *the eternal God is his refuge, and the everlasting arms his support*, he has no occasion to fear. *If God be for us, who can be against us?*—When the gates of hell and the powers of earth united, assail the believer, menacing destruction to both body and soul; then the *name*, the promises, the oath, and the attributes of *Jehovah*, are *a strong tower, an impregnable fortrefs*. And, being conscious of his own inability to resist the enemy, he *runneth into it, and is safe*†;

* Gen. xv. 1.

† Prov. xviii. 10.

secure

secure from every attack, however crafty or violent. The righteous man, the real christian, *dwelletb on high*, out of the reach of every evil. *His place of defence is the munitions of rocks*; immoveable, as their solid foundations; inaccessible, as their lofty ridges. Nor shall the favoured inhabitants of this everlasting fortress, ever be obliged to surrender for want of provisions. A fulness of living bread, and streams of living water, are united with invincible strength. For it is added, *Bread shall be given him, and his waters shall be sure* ‡. He shall want neither nourishment nor protection; outward defence nor inward comfort.—Happy, then, thrice happy are they, who are under the reign of grace! Every attribute of Deity is engaged to promote their felicity. All the eternal counsels terminate in their favour, and every providence has a peculiar respect to their advantage.—Thus divine grace appears and reigns in the *perseverance* of the true believer. For grace provides the means necessary to it; grace applies them; and omnipotent grace crowns them with success, to its own eternal honour and praise.

‡ Isa. xxxiii. 16.

C H A P. XI.

Of the Person of Christ, by whom Grace reigns.

THE Person of Christ, considered in connection with his *work*, is a copious and exalted subject; infinitely deserving our most attentive regards. For his *person* is dignified with every *excellency*, divine and human; and his *work* includes every *requisite*, for the complete salvation of our guilty souls.

The constitution of the Redeemer's wonderful person, was the effect of infinite wisdom, and a manifestation of boundless grace. In the hypostatical union of the divine and human nature in Jesus, is the foundation of our hopes of eternal happiness laid. By the personal union of these two natures, he is rendered capable of performing the work of a mediator, between God and man. For if he had not been possessed of a nature inferior to that which is *divine*, he could neither have performed the *obedience* required, nor suffered the *penalty* threatened, by the holy law; both which were absolutely necessary to the salvation of sinners.

Nor

Nor was it sufficient for him merely to assume a *created* nature ; it was necessary it should be that which is common to *men*. For the law being given to man, the obedience required by it, as the condition of life, was to be performed by *man*, a *real*, though sinless man. For the wisdom and equity of the supreme Legislator, could not have appeared in enacting a law for the use of mankind, if it had never, so much as in one instance, been honoured with perfect obedience by any in our nature. And as man was become a transgressor of the law, under its curse, and bound to suffer eternal misery ; it was necessary that he who should undertake his deliverance, by vicarious sufferings, should be himself a man. It would not have appeared agreeable, that a different nature from that which sinned, should have suffered for sin.—Had the infinite Sovereign been pleased to have redeemed the *angels* that fell, we may with reverence suppose, that it would have appeared suitable to divine wisdom, that their redeemer should have assumed the *angelic* nature. But as man, having lost his happiness, was the creature to be redeemed ; and the human nature, having lost its excellence, was the nature to be restored ; it was necessary, that *that* re-

demption, and *this* restoration, should be effected in the *human* nature. For *as by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners*, brought under condemnation and liable to eternal death ; *even so, by the obedience of one man, Jesus Christ, must many be made righteous* ; be delivered from condemnation and accepted to everlasting life.

It was necessary also, that the human nature of Christ, in which he was to accomplish our deliverance, should be derived from the *common root* and fountain of it in our first parents. For it does not appear suitable to answer the various purposes designed by the assumption of it, that it should be created immediately out of nothing ; nor yet that his body should be formed out of the dust of the earth, as was the body of the first man. Because, on that supposition, there would have been no such alliance between him and us, as to lay a foundation for our hope of salvation by his undertaking. It was necessary that he who should sustain the character and perform the work of a *Redeemer*, should be our *Goel*, or *near kinsman* ; one to whom the right of redemption belonged *. So it was

* Lev. xxv. 48, 49. Ruth ii. 20. and iii. 9. Margin.
declared

declared in the first promise; *The seed of the woman, and no other, shall bruise the serpent's head.* He was not only to assume the nature of man, but to partake of it by being *made of a woman.* Thus he became our kinsman, our brother. According to that saying, *Both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one nature: for which cause, He is not ashamed to call them brethren.**

—Amazing condescension this! That the Son of the Highest should become the child of the virgin; that the God of nature should become the seed of her, who, with a bold, presumptuous hand, plucked the fatal fruit, which entailed death on all our race; that He whom angels adore, should appear in our nature when sunk in ruin, that he might obey and bleed and die, for our deliverance; what words can express, what heart can conceive, the depth of that condescension, and the riches of that grace, which appear in such a procedure?

It was absolutely necessary, notwithstanding, that the nature in which the work of redemption was to be performed, should not be so derived from its original fountain, as to be

* Heb. ii. 11.

tainted with sin; or partake, in any degree, of that moral defilement, in which every child of *Adam* is conceived and born *. It behoved us to have such an high-priest, as was *holy, harmless, and separate from sinners*; for as a *priest*, he was to atone for our sins and ransom our souls. If the human nature of Christ had partook, in any measure, of that pollution which is hereditary to us, since the fall; it would have been destitute of the holy image of God, as we are before regeneration: and, consequently, he would have been rendered incapable of making the least atonement for us. He that is sinful himself, cannot satisfy justice on the behalf of another; for by one offence he forfeits his own soul.—Here, then, the adorable wisdom of God appears in its richest glory. In that, though it was necessary our Surety should be *man* and the *seed of the woman*; yet, that he should be conceived in such a manner, as to be entirely without sin. Yes, Jesus, though born of a woman, was absolutely free from the guilt of the first transgression, and from every degree of that natural depravity which is common to all the offspring of *Adam*.

* Ps. li. 5.

And

And as the immaculate purity of our Mediator's humanity, is an article of the last importance to the salvation of our perishing souls; so it is frequently and strongly asserted, in the sacred writings. The perfect rectitude of his heart, and the unspotted sanctity of his life, are there displayed in the most lively colours.

A little to explain and illustrate the important truth, it may be of use to consider; How it is that we, who are the natural descendants of *Adam*, became guilty through the first transgression, and are made partakers of a depraved nature.—As to the *guilt* of the first disobedience, it may be observed; That the whole human nature subsisted in our original parents, when it was committed; and that *Adam* was our federal head and public representative. Hence it is, that his sin became the sin of us all; is justly imputed to us and charged upon us. *In him*, as our common representative, *we all sinned*. Such being our natural state, as the descendants of an apostate head, we justly bear this humbling, this awful character; CHILDREN OF WRATH, BY NATURE.—But *Adam* was not a federal head to Christ. The Lord from heaven was neither *included* in him, nor *re-*

presented by him. He was not included *in him*. For the blessed Jesus was conceived in a way entirely supernatural, and born of a virgin. He was not born in virtue of that prolific word, by which the great Creator blessed the connubial state before the fall, *Increase and multiply*; but in virtue of the *promise*, made after the fall, when *Adam* ceased to be any longer a public person. He was not represented *by him*. For our grand progenitor was a representative to none but his natural offspring. The holy Jesus, therefore, not being naturally descended from him, could not be represented by him.—And, indeed, it appears highly incongruous for us to imagine, that he who was of *the earth, earthly*, should be the representative of Him who is *the Lord from heaven*; of Him who is, in all respects, his great Superior. It could not be, that One in personal union with the Son of God, should acknowledge *Adam* for his covenant-head. Our Lord, therefore, had no concern in his guilt, as a descendant from him; which is the case of all his natural posterity. The promised Seed not being included in that covenant, under which the first human pair stood; could not be chargeable with any part of that guilt, which attended

attended the violation of it. Original guilt becomes ours, in virtue of *Adam's* relation to us, as our representative; and hence it is imputed to us by a righteous God. If we had not been some way involved in the first transgression, before it was imputed to us, it could not, justly, have been charged upon us. It is not the *imputation* of *Adam's* offence, that makes it ours; but, *being legally ours*, in consequence of our relation to him, it is justly imputed to us.

Nor could the Lord our Redeemer be liable to the necessary consequence of *Adam's* sin; that is, a *depravation* of nature. "This immediately followed, as the natural effect of his first transgression. Which transgression, being committed by him, as our representative, is legally ours; and hence it is that we share with him, in its natural and awful effects. In other words, we derive a corrupt nature from him, because we were guilty with him. Nor was the imputation of his sin to us, the cause of this woful effect; but his offence being legally ours, *prior* to that imputation. But, as Christ was not concerned with him in original guilt, having no connection with him as a federal head; the natural consequence of that guilt, could

not take place in Him, as it does in us, being represented by *Adam* and descended from him, according to the common course of nature*.—Thus was the human nature of Jesus, entirely free from all contamination. And thus that *holy thing*, which was formed in the womb of the virgin, by the power of the Most High; was constituted a *second Adam*, in opposition to the *first*. And the production of the human nature of our glorious Immanuel, being in a way supernatural and divine; is called the *creation of a new thing in the earth*†. Thus Christ became a partaker of the *nature* which had sinned; without the *least sinfulness* of that nature.

It was absolutely necessary also, that our Mediator and Surety should be *God*, as well as man. For as he could not have obeyed, or suffered at all, if he had not been possessed of a *created* nature; so, if he had been a *mere* man, however immaculate, he could not have redeemed one soul. Yea, though he had been possessed of the highest possible created excellencies, they would not have

* Mr. BRINE's *Sermon on 2 Cor. v. 21.* p. 6, 7, 8.

† *Jer. xxxi. 22.* See *WITS. Oecon. I. 3. c. 4. § 10.*
Dr. OWEN on the Person of Christ, chap. 10.

been

been sufficient; he would still have been a dependant being. For as it is essential to Deity, to be underived and self-existent; so it is essential to a creature, to be derived and dependant. The loftiest seraph that sings in glory, is as really dependant upon God, every moment of his existence, as the meanest worm that crawls. In this respect, an angel and an insect are both on a level.—Every rational creature, therefore, whether human or angelical, having received existence from the Almighty, and being continually dependant upon Him, as the all-producing, all-supporting first Cause; must be bound to perpetual obedience, by virtue of that relation in which he stands to God, as his maker and preserver. It is highly impious to suppose it possible for any creature to supererogate, or do more in a way of obedience to Him, from whom he received his all, than he is under the strongest obligations to perform for himself, in consequence of his absolute and universal dependance. And whatever is previously due from any one, on his own account, cannot be transferred to another, without rendering the first devoid of that obedience, which it is absolutely necessary for him to have. Universal obedience, in every

every possible instance, is so necessary in a rational creature, as such, being dependant upon God and created for his glory; that the omission of it, in any degree, would not only be criminal, but expose to everlasting ruin.

The righteousness, therefore, of a mere creature, however highly exalted, could not have been accepted by the Sovereign of the universe, as any compensation for our disobedience. For whoever undertakes to perform a vicarious righteousness, must be one who is not obliged to obedience on his own account. Consequently, our Surety must be a Divine Person, for every mere creature is under indispensable obligations, to perfect and perpetual obedience.—And, as our situation required, so the gospel reveals, a Mediator and Substitute, thus exalted and glorious. For Jesus is described as a Divine Person, as one who could, without arrogance, or the least disloyalty, claim independance; and, when thus considered, he appears fit for the task. But of such a Person we could have had no idea, without that distinction of Persons in the Godhead, which the scriptures reveal. Agreeable to this distinction, we behold the rights of the Deity asserted and vindicated, with infinite majesty and authority,

riety, in the Person of the *Father*; while we view every divine perfection displayed and honoured, in the most illustrious way, by the amazing condescension of the Eternal *Son*—By the humiliation of Him, who, in his lowest state of subjection, could claim an equality with God.—Such being the dignity of our glorious Sponser, it was by his own voluntary condescension, that he became incarnate, and *took upon him the form of a servant*. By the same free act of his will, he was *made under the law*, to perform that obedience in our stead, to which, as a Divine Person, he was no way obliged.

The necessity there was that our surety should be a divine Person, might be further proved, by considering the *infinite evil* there is in sin. That sin is an infinite evil, appears from hence. Every crime is more or less heinous, in proportion as we are under obligations to the contrary. For the criminality of any disposition, or action, consists, in *a contrariety to what we ought to possess or perform*. If, therefore, we hate, disobey, or dishonour any person, or being; the sin is always proportioned to the obligations we are under, to love, honour and obey him. And the obligations we are under to love, honour

honour and obey any person, are in proportion to his loveliness, dignity and authority. Of this none can doubt.—If, then, infinite beauty, dignity, and authority, belong to the immensely glorious God; we must be under equal obligations to love, honour and obey him; and a contrary conduct must be infinitely criminal. Sin, therefore, is a violation of infinite obligations to duty; consequently, an unlimited evil, and deserving of infinite punishment. Such being the nature and aggravations attending our crimes, we stood in absolute need of a surety, the worth of whose obedience and sufferings, should be equal to the unworthiness of our persons, and the demerit of our disobedience.—If, to the evil there is in every sin, we take into consideration, the *countless millions* of enormous crimes, which were to be expiated; the vast *number of sinners*, which were to be redeemed; and the *infinite weight* of divine wrath, which was to be sustained; all which were to be completed in a limited and short time, in order to reconcile man to God and effect his eternal salvation; we shall have still stronger evidence in proof of the point.

Were a laboured defence of the *proper Deity* of Christ my intention, the scriptures would furnish me with ample matter and abundant evidence,

evidence, in favour of the capital truth. For the *names* which he bears, the *perfections* ascribed to him, the *works* he has done, and the *honours* he has received, loudly proclaim his ETERNAL DIVINITY. But I wave the attempt, and proceed to take notice,

That it was necessary our surety should be *God-man*, in unity of person. This necessity arises from the nature of his work, which is that of a *mediator* between God and man. If he had not been a partaker of the *divine* nature, he could not have been qualified to treat with *God*; if not of the *human*, he would not have been fit to treat with *man*. Deity alone was too *high* to treat with man; humanity alone, was too *low* to treat with God. The eternal Son, therefore, assumed our nature, that he might become a *middle-person*; and so be rendered capable of *laying his hands upon both* †, and of bringing them into a state of perfect friendship. He could not have been a mediator, in regard to his office, if he had not been a middle-person, in respect to his *natures*.—Such is the constitution of his wonderful Person; and hence it is that he bears the name, **IMMANUEL**; *God with us*, or in our nature.

† Job ix. 33.

The perfect performance of all his offices, as *priest*, *prophet*, and *king*, requires this union of the divine, to the human nature.—As a *Priest*. For it was necessary he should have *something to offer*; that he should offer *himself*. But *pure Deity* could not be offered. It was requisite, therefore, that he should be *man*, and taken from among men, as every other high-priest was.—And, had he not been *God*, as he could not have had an absolute power over his own life, to lay it down and take it up at his pleasure; so the offering of the human nature, if not in union with the divine, would not have made a proper atonement for our transgressions—would by no means have expiated that enormous load of human guilt, which was to be borne by him, and for which he was to suffer. Nor could his sufferings have been accounted an equivalent, in the eye of justice, to that everlasting punishment which the righteous law threatens against sin; which must have been the sinner's portion, as it is his just desert, if such a glorious Sponser had not appeared and been admitted on his behalf. But when we consider that He who suffered, the just for the unjust, was *God-man*; we cannot but look upon him, as perfectly

perfectly able to bear the vengeance and perform the work. For as the infinite evil of sin, arises from the majesty and glory of Him against whom it is committed ; so the merit of our Surety's obedience and sufferings, must be equal to the dignity of his person. How great, how transcendently glorious, are the perfections of the eternal Jchovah! so great, so superlatively excellent, is the atonement of the dying Jesu.

As a *Prophet*. For had he not been the omniscient *God*, he could not, without a revelation, have known the divine will respecting his people. Nor could he have had a sufficient acquaintance with that infinite variety of cases, in which they continually stand in need of his teaching, in every age and nation. And, if he had not been *man*, he could not, so suitably, in his own person, have revealed the divine will to them.

As a *King*. For if he had not been *God*, he could not have ruled in the heart and been lord of the conscience ; nor would he have been able to defend and provide for the church, in this imperfect and militant state. Neither could he, in his own right, have dispensed eternal life to his followers, or everlasting death to his enemies, at the last day.

day. And if he had not been *man*, he could not have been an head, either political or natural, of the same kind with the body to which he is united, and over which he is placed, as King in Zion. Consequently, he could not have sympathized with the members of his mystical body, as he evidently does*.—But as his wonderful Person is dignified with every perfection, divine and human; as he possesses all the glories of Deity, and all the graces of immaculate humanity; these render him a mediator completely amiable and supremely glorious—an adequate object of the sinner's confidence, and the believer's joy.

Hence it appears, that Jefus is a glorious, a divine mediator; a mediator that has power with God and with man. He must be able, therefore, *to save to the uttermost*, to all perfection and for ever, *all that come to God by him*. The obedience of such a Surety must magnify the law, and render it truly venerable; must have an excellence and a merit, incomparably and inconceivably great. It must be of more value than all the obedience of all the saints in the world, or of all the

* Heb. ii. 18. and iv. 15. AMESII Medul. Theol. cap. 19:
angels

angels in glory. The sufferings underwent by this heavenly Substitute, the sacrifice offered up by this wonderful High-priest ; must be all-sufficient to expiate the most accumulated guilt; omnipotent to save the most horrid transgressor. For his obedience is that in *worth*, which his person is in dignity. *This infinite in glory, that boundless in merit.*

As the greatness of an offence is proportioned to the dignity of the person, whose honour is invaded by it; so the value of the satisfaction made, by the sufferings of any one, must be equal to the excellence of the person satisfying. Sin being committed against infinite Majesty, deserved infinite punishment; the sacrifice of Christ is of infinite worth, being offered by a Person of infinite dignity. It was the sacrifice, not of a mere man, not of the highest angel, but of JESUS the incarnate GOD; of Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and head over all the creation. As the infinite glory of his divine Person cannot be separated from his humanity; so infinite merit is necessarily connected with his obedience and sufferings. In all that he did and in all that he underwent, he was the Son of God; as well on the cross, as before his incarnation; as well

when he cried, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* as when he raised the dead and reversed the laws of nature. He was Jehovah's Fellow, when he felt the sword of justice awake upon him ; he thought it no robbery to assert an equality with God, even when he was fastened to the bloody tree and expired under a curse †.—Was the sin for which he suffered infinitely evil? the Person who satisfied is infinitely excellent. Did an infinite Object suffer in his honour, by our offences? the injury is repaired by an infinite Subject making an atonement for them. Our sin is infinite, in respect to the Object ; our Sacrifice is infinite, in regard to the Subject. Jehovah considered our Surety, as *the Man his Fellow*, when he smote him ; we should consider him under the same exalted character, when we believe on him and plead him before God *.—“ Here is firm footing, “ here is solid rock.” In the divine dignity of the Redeemer's person, and the consummate perfection of his work ; there is an everlasting basis laid, for *faith*, the *assurance of faith*, the *full assurance of faith*—A basis,

† Zech. xiii. 7. Philip. ii. 6, 8. Gal. iii. 13.

* CHARNOCK's *Works*, vol. 2. p. 899, 900, 901, 902.

firm,

firm, as the pillars of nature; immoveable, as the eternal throne.

Whereas, if, with the *Socinians*, we suppose that Jesus had no existence before his conception in the womb of the virgin, and so look upon him as a *mere man*; or if, with the *Arians*, we imagine him to be a kind of *super-angelic spirit*, united to an human body; yea, though we should compliment him, as some of them have done, with ascribing all divine perfections to him, except *eternity* and *self-existence*, which is absurdly impious; yet we rob him of proper Deity, we make him a dependant being, we reduce him to the rank of creatures, and deprive ourselves of that foundation of confidence in him, which his true character affords. For we can never persuade ourselves, that the sufferings of a *mere creature*, for so short a time, could be accepted by the most high and holy God, as a righteous compensation to his law and justice, for the sins of innumerable millions of hell-deserving transgressors. Hence it is, that they who deny the eternal Godhead of Christ, in general deny, that he made satisfaction for sin to divine justice. Thus far they are consistent, and (what they affect to be called) *rational*. But they would do well to con-

sider whether they are able to satisfy justice themselves; or how they can expect admission into the kingdom of glory, by the sin-avenging God, without any satisfaction made for their crimes. For, certain it is, that He who governs the universe, is eternally and inflexibly *just*, as well as infinitely and divinely *merciful*. *The just God and the Saviour*, is his revealed character. As such we must know him and trust in him, if we would escape the wrath to come.

Here let the reader admire and adore the *love* of the eternal Father, and the *condescension* of the divine Son.—*The love of the eternal Father*. For the glorious person described, is the Son of God, and the Father's gift to sinful men. In comparison with whom, all creatures and all worlds bestowed upon us for an inheritance, would be trifling and next to nothing. For all created things are equally easy to divine power, being only the effects of the simple will of God. The formation of an angel or an insect, of a thousand systems or a thousand grains, is the same thing to omnipotence. For which reason, there could be no real comparative greatness, in any such gifts. If, therefore, the eternal God would manifest his love to an *uncommon* degree;

degree; if he would declare his perfections and gratify his mercy, in blessing his offending creatures, so as to have an appearance of *doing violence* to himself; it must be by giving his *only begotten Son*, who is one in nature and equal in glory with him—by giving him to become, their substitute, their propitiation and saviour. In this view, how great the propriety, how striking the beauty of that saying; *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Here divine love appears to the utmost advantage; here it shines in all its glory. For its rich donation is infinitely excellent, and the blessedness resulting from it, is consummate and eternal. Such is the view which the gospel gives, of divine, redeeming love. But if we reject the Deity of Christ, we obscure its glory, we weaken its force, nay, we destroy its very being.

The condescension of the divine Son. That He who was in the form of God and thought it no robbery to be equal with God; that He whom angels obey, that He whom seraphs adore, and before whom they veil their faces; as conscious of their own comparative meanness, or as dazzled with the blaze of his infinite glories—that He should be-

come man, take upon him the form of a servant, perform obedience, and submit to death, even the most infamous and accursed death of the cross, is amazing! But, that He should thus die for *sinners*, for his *enemies*, and pour out his blood for such as were in *actual rebellion* against him, is unspeakably more amazing! These are demonstrative proofs, that the Lord our Redeemer is as much superior to his creatures in the riches of his grace, as he is in the depths of his wisdom, or the acts of his power. Let all the heavens adore him! and let all the children of men be filled with wonder and burn with gratitude! For this Redeemer, glorious as he is, is accessible by sinners; was designed for sinners; and on them his power and grace will be magnified.

Let the sinner, then, he who is conscious of nothing but misery and wretchedness about him; flee to the all-sufficient Mediator; trust in him as mighty to save; and divine veracity has engaged, that he shall not be disappointed in his expectations. As a divine Person, He must be able to act agreeably to every *character* he bears; perfectly qualified to execute every *office* he has undertaken; nor can he be in the least deficient in any of those *relations*, in which he stands

to his people.—Let us, therefore, repose the most unreserved confidence in his atonement and intercession, as our *Priest*; look to him alone for instruction, as our *Prophet*; be subject to him, and expect protection from him, as our *King*. Let us, as in duty bound, manifest the most fervent love to him, as our *Redeemer*; yield him the most cordial obedience, as our *Lord*; address him with the highest honours, and pay him the sublimest worship, as our *God*. And let such as dispute, or deny, his proper Deity, be careful lest they perish in their gainsaying; and too late acknowledge, that He is **OVER ALL, GOD BLESSED FOR EVER** *.

Once more: Let my reader contemplate with wonder and joy, the infinite honour which is conferred on the *human nature*, in the Person of the great Mediator. For it is in everlasting union with the Son of God; is now seated on a throne of light; is the most glorious of all creatures, and the eternal ornament of the whole creation. Yes, believer, He on whom you rely, in whose hands you have intrusted your soul, still wears your nature while he pleads your

* Psal. ii. 12. Rom. ix. 5.

cause. That very body, which once hung on the cross and was laid in the grave; that very soul, which once suffered the keenest anguish, and was *exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*; are now, and ever will be, in close connection with the Godhead. Mysterious, ineffable union! big with wonder and replete with comfort. How encouraging it is to consider, that as Jesus is still clothed with humanity; that very humanity, in which he suffered afflictions and trials of every kind and every degree; he cannot forget his tempted, despised, afflicted people, in this militant state. In himself he sees their image; in his hands he beholds their names. He feels for them, he suffers with them*: he never will, he never can overlook their persons, or be unmindful of their best interests.

* Heb. ii. 18. and iv. 15.

C H A P. XII.

Of the Work of Christ, through which Grace reigns.

HAVING taken a view of the admirable and glorious constitution of the *Person* of Christ, and of his qualifications for the work of a Mediator, arising from his personal excellencies, considered as **IMMANUEL**; we must now advert to that wonderful and perfect *work*, through which grace reigns, and in virtue of which she dispenses her favours.

Grace reigns, says the oracle of heaven, **THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS**. *Righteousness*, in this place, I understand as including the *whole* of that obedience which the Redeemer, under the character of a surety, performed to the preceptive part of the law; together with all those bitter sufferings which he underwent, in conformity to its penal sanction. Through this obedience grace reigns, in a way strictly conformable to the rights of divine justice. By this most perfect work of Christ, the tenderest *mercy* is shewed to miserable

miserable sinners, and *meets* with the truth of Jehovah's righteous threatenings against sin. Here the *righteousness* of God, as the giver of the law, appears in taking vengeance on sin, as a transgression of it; in such a manner, as is productive of substantial and lasting *peace* to the sinner*. Happy expedient! Wonderful grace!—But let us a little more particularly consider, the nature and excellencies of this evangelical righteousness.

As to its *nature*: It is a complete conformity to the divine law. Whatever the law demanded, as *duty*, that the adorable Jesus performed in its fullest extent. His *nature* being perfectly holy, the *principle* of his actions was absolutely pure; the *end* for which he did them entirely right; while the *matter* of them and *rule* of their performance, were without any deficiency.—And whatever the law, considered as broken, threatened by way of *punishment* to the offender; to that he submitted and that he willingly bore, in all its severity. For *he was made sin*; *he was made a curse*. He suffered—amazing love! unparalleled condescension!—He suffered the *greatest shame*, the most *excruciating pain*,

* Psal. lxxxv. 10.

which the malice of men, or the subtilty of devils could invent or inflict ; and, what was infinitely more, *the wrath of God*. And though the duration of his sufferings was comparatively short, yet for this the infinite dignity of his Person was a full compensation.—When we consider, that it was the SON OF GOD and LORD OF GLORY, who bled and died, under every circumstance of infamy and pain; all the dreadful monuments of divine vengeance, inflicted on the sons of violence and rebellion in past ages, and transmitted to posterity in the most authentic records; all the misery that awaits the disobedient and licentious world, and is denounced in the book of God; cannot raise our ideas of the vindictive justice of the great Sovereign so high, as the remembrance of the bitter, though transitory, sufferings of the divine Jefus.

The excellencies of this righteousness appear from the *characters* it bears in holy writ. To signify its unspotted purity, it is called *fine linen, clean and white*. To denote its completeness, it is called a *robe*. To hold forth its exquisite beauty, richness and glory, it is called *cloathing of wrought gold, and raiment of needle-work*. And, to point out its unequalled

unequalled excellency, it is called the *best robe*. It is better than the robe of innocence, with which our first parents were cloathed before the fall ; yea, better than the righteousness of the angels in glory. For theirs is but the obedience of mere creatures, dependant beings. But this—which is the highest epithet that language can give—this is *the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD*. Its nature and properties are such, that the Lord himself seems to glory in it, frequently calling it *His righteousness* *.

Again : It is an *everlasting* righteousness †. It is a robe, the beauty of which will never be *tarnished* ; a garment that will never *decay* ; and cloathing that will never *wear out*. When millions of ages have run their ample round, it will continue the same that it was the first day it came into use ; and when millions more are elapsed, there will be no alteration. The continuance of its efficacy, beauty and glory, will be lasting as the light of the new *Jerusalem* ; unfading as the eternal inheritance.

* Rev. xix. 8. Isa. lxi. 10. Ps. xlv. 13, 14. Luke xv. 22. 2 Cor. v. 21. Rom. x. 3. Jer. xxiii. 6. Isa. xlvi. 13. and li. 5, 6, 8. and lvi. 1. † Dan. ix. 24.

Further

Further: It is a righteousness *already performed*. It is not something *now* to be wrought, by the operations of the Spirit of Christ in us. No; it was completed, thoroughly completed, when the divine Redeemer cried; *It is finished, and gave up the ghost*.—But here, many persons fall into a fatal mistake. Ready they are to imagine, that sinners are accepted of God, in virtue of a righteousness wrought in them, and performed by them, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit: which assistance, they suppose, was purchased for them by the death of Jesus, for that purpose. But, so long as this is the case, they never can experience what it is to be in a justified state. Besides, when the blessed Jesus died, he did not do something to assist our weak, but willing endeavours, to save ourselves; he did not lay in a provision of grace, or purchase the Spirit for us, by which the defects of enfeebled nature might be supplied, and we rendered capable of performing the condition of our justification. But, at that awful and ever memorable period, when he bowed his head and expired; he, by himself alone, perfectly finished that righteousness, which is the proper condition and the grand requisite of our justi-

justification.—That the Spirit of grace and truth, as given to any, is a *fruit*, a *precious* fruit of the death, resurrection, and glorification of Jesus, is freely acknowledged; but that He died to purchase the Spirit, to work in us any part of that righteousness, on account of which we are accepted with God, must be denied. For the principal work of the Spirit, in the œconomy of grace, Jesus himself bearing witness, is to testify of him, and reveal his glory to the conscience. *He shall testify of me—He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you* *. Nor does the Spirit of truth act as a *sanctifier*, till, in order of nature, we are perfectly *justified*. And when justified, he effects our *sanctification* by that very truth, which reveals the obedience of Christ as a finished work.—To think otherwise, is according to the *Popish* scheme, which confounds justification and *sanctification* together; but is very far from being the doctrine of the apostles, and is also contrary to the sentiments of our first Reformers, and all their genuine successors, both at home and abroad.

* John xv. 26, and xvi. 14. 1 Cor. ii. 12.

But,

But, notwithstanding what has been said, concerning the matchless excellencies of the Redeemer's righteousness; the reader, whose mind is enlightened to behold the defects attending his own best performances, and whose conscience is affected with a sense of deserved wrath, will, peradventure, be ready to say; "As to the glorious nature and superlative excellencies of this obedience, there is no dispute. But, is it free for the *sinner*? Is it not rather designed for those who are some way *qualified* for it, by a set of holy principles, and a series of pious actions; such as are distinguished from the altogether worthless and vile? Is there any possibility for a miserable sinner, an obnoxious wretch; one whose transgressions are great and corruptions strong, to partake of it and be made happy by it? and if there be, which is the way?"—To these solicitous and interesting enquiries, the oracles of God furnish us with a copious and substantial answer. They inform us, that there is *another* excellency attending it, which has a particular respect to the *manner* of its communication; and, therefore, ought by no means to be overlooked. Blessed be God! the unerring word warrants me to assert, that this righte-

righteousness is *free*, *absolutely free*. It was wrought for the *sinner*; it was designed for the *sinner*; and is bestowed, freely bestowed on the *vilest* of sinners. It is not matter of bargain, or the subject of sale; it is not proposed on, I know not what, *conditions*; as the performing some arduous course of duties, or the attaining some notable qualifications; but is a *free gift* *. Grace, as a sovereign, is exalted to confer it; and grace, we know, deals only with the *unworthy*. As a gift it is imparted; as a gift, therefore, it must be received; and, as for an absolutely free gift, the possessor of it ought to be thankful.—From these considerations we may with confidence affirm, that the *mere* sinner, the *obnoxious* wretch; he who feels himself in a perishing condition, and is conscious that he deserves no favour; has the strongest encouragement given him to rely on it, as *sufficient* for his justification and *free* for his use. Yes, disconsolate sinner, you have no reason to hesitate, whether you have a right to receive it and call it your own. Believing the testimony which God has given of his Son, you receive it and enjoy the comforts arising

* Rom. v. 15, 16, 17.

from

from it. Heaven proclaims your welcome to Jesus, and eternal faithfulness insures success to all that believe in him.

Once more: By a figure of speech, common in the scripture, this righteousness is represented as *speaking*. Doubtless, then, so noble a righteousness must have a charming language. Let us attend to the purport of it.—It is considered, by *Paul*, as standing in direct opposition to that description which *Moses* gives, of *the righteousness of the law*; and thus it addresses the anxious enquirer. *Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above;* as though he had not appeared in human nature, to perform a righteousness for the justification of sinners. Nor does it bid thee enquire, *Who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead;* as if he had not perfectly paid the debt, for which, as a surety, he became responsible; and received in his resurrection, from the hand of his Father, an acquittance in full, for himself and his people. *But what saith it,* what then is its language? *The word of the gospel, which reveals this righteousness, is nigh thee, sinful and wretched as thou art.* *Even so near, as to be in thy mouth to pro-*

D d claim

claim its excellencies, and in thy heart to enjoy its comforts; that is the word, the doctrine of faith, which we preach. And it further informs us, *That if thou shalt confess, with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, as dying an accursed death for thy redemption; and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead*, as a divine testimony that the atonement made was accepted, and for thy justification; *thou shalt be saved* from eternal misery and exalted to the joys of heaven*.

Here we have the language of this divine righteousness described, both negatively and positively. *Negatively*: We are not commanded by it, to do some *arduous work* in order to obtain acceptance; nor are we required to do any thing at all, for that purpose. For believing in *Christ*, which is here mentioned, is, in the business of justification, opposed to works and doings of every kind †. The faith here designed, is to be considered, as the receiving of Christ and his righteousness; or, as a *dependance* on him alone for salvation. Believing the gospel-report, we receive

* Rom. x. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.
Gal. iii. 12, 18.

† Rom. iv. 5, 16.

the afonement; we enjoy the comfort; and have the earnest of future glory.

But as the awakened sinner is ever ready to imagine, that he must *do some great thing* in order to obtain the pardon of sin and peace for his conscience; therefore the language of this righteousness is also described *positively*. And here it declares, that the obedience, by which alone there is favour with God and an hope of happiness, is already performed. And, that the anxious enquirer is not left to a dubious peradventure, how he may come at it; for it is brought near him in the word of grace, with a free welcome to rely on it and use it as his own, to the everlasting honour of its divine Author.

Before we take our leave of this infstruc-
tive text, we may observe, by a compari-
son of what the apostle says about the
righteousness of faith, with what *Moses*
says concerning the *righteousness of the
law*; That whoever thinks of doing any
good work, as the *condition* of life, is igno-
rant of that obedience which the gospel re-
veals; is under the law, as a covenant; is a
debtor to perform the whole; and, as a
breaker of it, is obnoxious to its awful curse.
This is his case even when, with the pharisee

in the parable, he gives thanks to God for assisting him to perform the supposed condition, whether great or small. For the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith, here distinguished, are directly opposed. This is evident from the scope of the place in general; and especially from the adversative *but*, with which what is said, about the righteousness of faith, is introduced.

Nor is this excellent obedience less *useful* to the sinner than perfect in it'self. For here we behold, that holy law, which we have broken, highly honoured; and that awful justice, which we have offended, completely satisfied. By this righteousness the believer is acquitted from every charge, is perfectly justified, and shall be eternally saved. In this consummate work, Jehovah declares himself well-pleased*, and in it all the glories of the Godhead shine.—Yes, the obedience of our adorable Sponsor, is great, as the wisdom of God could devise; perfect, as infinite rectitude itself could demand. Excellent righteousness! Who would not, with *Paul*, desire to *be found in it?* and who, that is conscious of an interest in it, can cease to ad-

* *Isaiah xlii. 21.*

mire and adore, the grace that provided, and the Saviour that wrought it?

And is the obedience of the Lord Redeemer, so glorious in its nature, so excellent in its properties, so free in the manner of its communication to the sinner, and so extensively useful to all who possess it? What encouragement, then, has the indigent, miserable sinner to look to it! How safely may he confide in it, as all-sufficient to justify his ungodly soul! For, be the demands of the divine law and infinite justice ever so great, or numerous, or dreadful; the work of Christ completely answers them all. There is greater efficacy in the grace of the infinite God, and the work of his incarnate Son, to justify and save from deserved destruction; than there can be in the offence of the creature, to expose to it.

Nor can it seem strange that the work of Christ should be thus efficacious. For, God the *Son* performed it, in the capacity and under the character of a surety. God the *Father* declares his delight in it, and treats as his children all those that are vested with it. And it is the principal business of God the *Holy Ghost*, as a guide and a com-

forter, to testify of it. So that every other righteousness, in comparison with it, is quite insignificant. If set in competition with it, is viler than dross and worse than nothing.— The saints of old declared, that they would go forth in the strength of the Lord, and make mention of this righteousness, even of this only. Yes, in this righteousness, Christians in all ages have gloried, both living and dying, as the only ground of their hope. In this most perfect obedience, believers here are exalted, and the saints in light triumph. For the work finished on the cross, is the burden of their songs.— But who can point out *all* its beauties? Who can shew forth *half* its praise? For, after all that has been written or said about it, by prophets or apostles, here on earth; after all that has been sung or can be conceived, by saints or angels in the world of glory; we may assert, that, considered under its divine character, **THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JEHOVAH**, it exceeds all possible praise. The inhabitants of the heavenly world must be conscious, that their loftiest strains, though expressed with seraphic ardour and the most rapturous devotion;

fall

through which Grace reigns. 423

fall vastly short of displaying all its glory.
So that,

“ When Gabriel sounds these glorious things,
“ He tunes and summons all his strings.”

C H A P. XIII.

Of the Consummation of the glorious Reign
of Grace.

AS divine grace is glorious in *itself*, and infinitely superior to all that is called by that name, or can be exercised, among men; and as the *way* in which it reigns is absolutely without a parallel, and such as will for ever endear it to all who are interested in it; so the *end* of its benign agency and triumphant government is equally glorious, for it is *eternal life*. ETERNAL LIFE! reviving thought! This is the end which God designs, in subordination to his own glory, in all his gracious dispensations towards his people. The expressive phrase is used in scripture to signify, *An everlasting state of complete holiness and consummate happiness, in the vision and fruition of God, in all his persons and perfections*. Such is the blissful state, to which Grace, as a sovereign, infallibly brings her subjects, through the person and work of Immanuel.

In

In order to assist our feeble and contracted minds, in forming some faint ideas of this supreme blessedness, and to inform us who shall enjoy it; it is compared, in the sacred writings, to the most delightful and glorious things which come under our notice in the present world. For instance: To denote its superabounding delights, it is called *paradise* *, in allusion to the garden of *Eden*. For at God's *right-hand* are *pleasures for evermore*.—To signify its grandeur, magnificence and glory, it is called a *crown* and a *kingdom* †. As a crown, it is unfading and incorruptible. And, to intimate that none shall enjoy it, but in virtue of the Redeemer's obedience, it is denominated, a *crown of righteousness* ‡. It is also called, a *crown of life*, and a *crown of glory* ||. As a kingdom, it is boundless; was prepared for believers *before the foundation of the world*, and is the *kingdom of their Father* §; who bestows it upon them here, in right to possess, hereafter in the perfect enjoyment. And, to ascertain the perpetuity of it, it is called an

* Luke xxiii. 43. 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4. † 1 Cor. ix. 25.
Matt. xxv. 34. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 8. || James i. 12.
¶ Pet. v. 4. § Matt. xiii. 43. and xxv. 34.

everlasting kingdom * : while they who enjoy it, are called *kings*, are said to *sit upon thrones*, and to *reign in life* †.—To inform us who shall possess it, and in what way, it is called an *inheritance* ‡. Plainly denoting, that none but the *children* of God shall ever enjoy it; for a *servant*, considered as such, cannot inherit ||. We must, therefore, be the sons of the Highest, by adoption and grace, before we can justly expect the enjoyment of the heavenly patrimony. For, however diligent the sons of the living God may be, in keeping his commands and performing his will; they will not possess it under the notion of a *reward* of duty, or as *wages* for their work; but under the idea of a *gift*. *The gift of God is eternal life* §. It is a gift by way of *legacy*, and is bequeathed to them in the everlasting testament of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to those words; *And I appoint, by testament, unto you a kingdom* ¶. The kingdom is most glorious, the

* 2 Pet. i. 11.
Rom. v. 17.

† Rev. i. 6. and v. 10. and iii. 21.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 4.

|| John viii.

35. Gal. iv. 30. § Rom. vi. 23. ¶ Luke xxii. 29.
Thus the celebrated *Witsius* renders and interprets the passage, *Oecon.* l. 3. c. 10. § 28. To the same purpose *Beza* and *Castalio* render the words.—See *Leigh* on the word *Διατίθεμαι*.

inheritance most free to the children of God, and absolutely unalienable.

Nor are the heirs of this boundless bliss without some prelibations, some joyful fore-tastes of it, in this life. Faith being, as the apostle defines it, *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*; they anticipate, in some degree, the joys of the upper world. In the present state, they receive the earnest of their future inheritance, and rejoice in hope of the full fruition. Yea, at some bright intervals, they *rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*. *He that believeth bath everlasting life*, in the promise and the earnest of it. Having *fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them*; those *two immutable things*, the promise and the oath of God, in either of which *it is impossible for him to lie*; afford them *strong consolation* respecting their final preservation and eternal happiness. Living by faith on the dying, the ascended Redeemer, as their surety and sacrifice, their righteousness and advocate; and viewing the stability of the promise, the covenant, the oath of Jehovah; they have the greatest assurances, that *when Christ who is their life shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory*.

The

The future happiness and glorification of believers may be considered, either as it is enjoyed by the *separate spirit*, before the resurrection and the last judgment; or by the *soul and body united*, after that awful period is come and those grand events have taken place.—That the separate spirits of the saints are possessed of thought and consciousness, and that they enjoy ineffable bliss in communion with Jesus their exalted head; are truths manifestly contained in the unerring word. Soon as that mysterious union, which subsists between the soul and the body in the present state, is dissolved by death; the soul, being made perfectly free from the very being of sin, immediately enters into glory. Death, to the saints, so far from being a penal evil, is numbered among their privileges, and makes one article in their comprehensive inventory of divine blessings *. Death is the gate by which they enter the heavenly mansions prepared for them; in the possession of which they enjoy delights they could not experience, while in this mortal state. The knowledge of this sublime blessedness and of an interest in it, made the great apostle *desire*

* 1 Cor. iii. 22.

to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better; infinitely preferable to all that can be enjoyed on this side the grave.

The same incomparable man and infallible teacher says; *Whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord*; and declares, that it was far more eligible to him and his pious cotemporaries, to be *absent from the body and present with the Lord**.—Now, if the apostle's words have any sense, or if their meaning be at all intelligible; we cannot suppose he ever once imagined, that his soul, after its separation from the body, would lie in a *sleepy, unconscious, inactive* state, till the sound of the archangel's trumpet should awaken it; which notion is, by some, warmly espoused. For, in such a state of absolute insensibility, he could not, with any propriety, be said to *be with Christ*, or to enjoy the *presence of God*. Before the dissolution of his body he could rejoice, inwardly rejoice in the light of Jehovah's countenance, and had much sweet communion with his God; was indulged with bright manifestations of the divine favour, and could exult in the certain prospect of a blissful immortality; all

* 2 Cor. v. 6, 8.

which,

which, according to the *sleeping scheme*, he instantly lost by death. Under the deprivation of which he must continue, for a long, long series of years; even till the voice of the Omnipotent, and the alarming crash of a falling world, shall once more rally his dissipated, and awaken his drowsy powers into act; and so bring him into a second enjoyment of himself and his God. How uncomfortable such a thought to the real christian!

That the departing spirits of the children of God enter immediately into happiness, might be proved from a great variety of divine testimonies. Among which there are few more apposite to my purpose, than that which contains the very remarkable and gracious answer of Jesus to the converted *thief*, when they were both on the verge of the unseen world. *Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise**.—These words include a very particular answer to the request of the expiring penitent, who prayed that Christ would *remember him*. As if our Lord had said; “I will not only remember thee, as *absent*; for, verily, thou shalt be “with me in the everlasting mansions, to

* Luke xxiii. 43.

“ behold

“ behold my glory.” And as the dying petitioner desired his request might be granted, when the bleeding Jesus should enter into his kingdom ; the suffering Saviour certified him, not only of the *place* where he was to reign, which he calls *paradise* ; but also of the *time* when he was to enter upon the possession of his kingdom, signified by *to-day*. Nor is it unworthy of notice, that when this promise was made, the day was half elapsed ; for *it was about the sixth hour*, or the noon of the day *. Yet Christ promised him the joys of paradise before it concluded ; knowing that they should, in the interim, both make their exit.—And as the promise which was made to the thief was so very extraordinary, and the person to whom it was made being in such circumstances and bearing such an infamous character ; Jesus confirmed it with the asseveration, *Verily*. As if he had said, “ I, the *amen*, who am truth itself, so-“ lemnly declare, that what I have promised “ shall certainly be fulfilled *this day*.”

The different punctuation and sense of the text, given by those who adopt the sleeping scheme, appear far-fetched, strained and je-

* Luke xxiii. 43, 44.

june. They contend, that the words ought thus to be pointed; *I say unto thee to-day, thou shalt be with me in paradise.* As if our Lord had not the least intention to fix the *time*, when the converted malefactor should behold his glory; but only declared, by the expression *to-day*, the *certainty* of what he promised.—But, to this forced, unnatural, and insipid interpretation of the passage, it may be objected; That as the thief could not be ignorant of the time, when the gracious promise was made; so he had no occasion to have that particular distinguished and confirmed in so solemn a manner. Nor is it the expression *to-day*, but the word *verily*, which indicates the truth of what was affirmed and the certainty of enjoying the promised blessing. For as the *to-day*, in our Lord's answer, denotes a determinate time; so it evidently corresponds to the *when*, in the thief's petition *.

This *Socinian* hypothesis appears, not only *uncomfortable* to the *christian*, and *antisciptural* to the impartial examiner of the sacred records, but also *unphilosophical*. For, as the

* WITS. Oecon. 1. 3. c. 14. § 24. Exercit. in Symbol. Exercit. 26. § 67, 68, 69, 70.

soul is a thinking being, if, when the animal frame is dissolved, it were to be entirely deprived of thought and consciousness; it must, for aught appears to the contrary, lose its *existence*. So that, instead of a *resurrection* at the last day, there must be a new *creation*; which is contrary to the analogy of faith, and the hope of the saints in every age. For, a mind without *thought* and *consciousness*, and matter without *solidity* and *extension*, are equally absurd ideas, and absolute non-entities.

The separate spirits of the saints, therefore, being lodged in eternal mansions, and abiding at the fountain-head of all felicity, enjoy inconceivable pleasures. They are for ever released from all troubles of every kind and every degree; from all sins and sufferings; from all temptations and sorrows. Moral evil, with all its attendants, is eternally banished from those bright abodes; for the people that dwell there are all perfectly righteous, nor shall any of the inhabitants of that land say, *I am sick*. Their garments are always white; their harps are always tuned.—Being with Christ, according to his promise, they behold his glory; they are ravished with his beauty. The infinite ex-

cellencies of Jesus, the incarnate JEHOVAH, are abundantly more manifest in that exalted state. Those divine and mediatorial perfections, of which we can form but very low conceptions, while sojourning in these tabernacles; shine forth on the holy and happy spirits, in a blaze of glory.—With pleasing astonishment and adoring gratitude they reflect; “This is HE, who once raised a feeble “cry in the stable at *Bethlehem*! This is “HE, who spent his most precious and in-“conceivably useful life, in one continued “series of beneficent actions; surrounded “with meanness and poverty, reproaches and “sorrows! This is HE—but, O how “changed!—who made his exit on *Calvary*, “under every mark of infamy, under the “severest sensations of pain, both in body “and soul; and this, *all* this in our stead and “to accomplish our salvation!”—To view HIM eye to eye, who was once a man of sorrows and sufferings to the highest degree; to behold HIM who is their husband and head, after all the abasement and misery to which he submitted on their account, thus exalted and glorified, must fill their souls with ec- static bliss.

Nor

Nor are they the mere *spectators* of his glorious exaltation. They not only behold their Beloved, and have to do with him as inferior subjects with an exalted sovereign; but he entertains and rejoices over them, as his friends and brethren, as his spouse and portion. This we may learn from the friendly freedom he used with his disciples, while here on earth. For though, as their sovereign Lord, he required their supreme respect and profound adoration; yet he did not treat them as earthly monarchs are wont to treat their subjects. He did not keep them at an awful distance, but conversed with them in the most familiar manner. Doubtless, then, he does not behave with less freedom, or keep them at a greater distance, because of his exalted state; but rather takes them into a state of exaltation with himself. For though he is exalted above all blessing and praise, yet not as a *private* person, not for his *own* sake; but as the *head* of his numerous family, as the *representative* of all his people. The advancement of the head, therefore, cannot be intended to remove the members to a greater distance; for there is the same relation and the same union, subsisting between him and them; consequently, they

must be honoured and exalted with him. Beholding his infinite glory, their surprise and adoring regards are heightened; but it does not awe them into any separation from him. It only serves to increase their astonishment and joy, as they find him still condescending to admit them into such familiarity with him, and so liberally communicating his glory to them.

When in this lower world, they discerned the signatures of Deity in the works of creation and providence; they beheld the brighter displays of his glory, in the operations of his grace and the amazing effects of his love; in the gift of a Saviour and his death on the cross. But now, having their visive and contemplative powers abundantly strengthened, they behold manifestations of his infinite excellence, compared with which, all they before discovered of divine, in the material creation; all they enjoyed in the militant church, were poor and mean, were low and languid, beyond expression. For here they are surrounded with the opulence of God, and eternally enriched with his immense munificence.

If *Paul*, ravished with the more obscure appearances of divine *wisdom*, could not forbear crying out; *O the depth of the riches, both*

both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! what transports of wonder must it afford, to *the spirits of the just made perfect*, to have the counsels of heaven laid open to their view?

—The contemplation of divine *power*, under the conduct of infinite wisdom and leagued with boundless goodness, must heighten their pleasure. How delightful to behold, in the light of glory, that power which raised the vast frame of nature, and from the beginning sustained all things — That power, which turned the mighty wheels of providence in every age of the world, through all the revolutions of time — That uncontrollable power, which restrained legions of malignant spirits and accursed fiends, in ten thousand different instances, from perpetrating their malicious designs and filling the world with mischief; which wrought upon the obdurate hearts of the rebellious sons of *Adam*, caused them to bow to divine sovereignty, and made them willing to accept of salvation in the appointed way — That power, which, having formed their souls anew, preserved them in the midst of innumerable dangers that continually lay in their way to the regions of happiness; nor ever intermitted

its guardian influence, till it brought them safe to glory !

And if the power of God, as beheld by the saints in light, be so delightful a subject of contemplation; what exuberant joys must the views of his *love* afford? For as love is the noblest passion of the human breast, so it is the brightest beam of Divinity that ever irradiated the wide creation. Love is a pleasing theme, and the meaning of that divine sentence, **God is Love**, is there unfolded to the very life. They are no longer obliged to spell out Jehovah's love from his names and works, for they now behold it as intimately essential to his Being. The day they had long expected, that happy day which is appropriated to the full discoveries of divine love, is dawned upon them. For now they take their fill of loves. Now the immortal spirit is invigorated in all its powers, enlarged in all its faculties, on purpose to render it capable of taking in more copious views, and of receiving abundantly larger emanations of this love, than it could possibly before enjoy. They have now traced up the streams, to the eternal fountain; the beams, to the very sun of love.—The bosom of their Father, where the thoughts of love were lodged

from

from everlasting, and where its noble designs were formed, is laid open to their view. Now they clearly see, why the Son of God became incarnate; undertook the redemption of man; and, in order to accomplish the arduous work, obeyed and suffered, and groaned and died, the most tormenting and infamous death—Died, a sacrifice, an atonement for sin; a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. The wondering soul penetrates the vast design, and sees with the warmest gratitude; why itself was not made an everlasting monument of divine vengeance—why it was that it did not perish in its native enmity against God—why He so long suffered it to go on in rebellion against him, and to slight the Saviour; but at last, by the power of reigning grace, made a complete and happy conquest over it—all, *all* are resolved into *love*; the free, distinguishing love of God. And the adoring soul beholds, with ecstasies of delight, how well the admirable effects correspond to their grand, original cause. Certainly, nothing short of heaven itself, which gives the experience, can give an adequate idea of such superlative bliss *.

* HOWE'S *Blessedness of the Righteous*, chap. 5.

Nor will their views of divine *justice* ; no not in its awful effects considered as *vindictive*, and manifested in the damnation of innumerable myriads of apostate angels and sinful men ; in the least allay their joys or damp their pleasures. For, however infidels may now object against an eternal punishment being inflicted for *transient* crimes ; and arraign the Book of God itself, which asserts that so it shall be ; to them it appears, in the clearest light, that sin is an *infinite evil*, and therefore justly deserving of *perpetual misery*. And their holy wills being perfectly conformed to the divine, they fully acquiesce in the sentence pronounced against offenders ; and will rejoice in the execution of it on all the daring sons of rebellion, whether angels or men.—They now also more fully discover, how holiness in the Lawgiver, the demands of his law, and the rights of his justice ; were displayed and perfectly satisfied, in the redemption of their souls by the blood of the cross. The remembrance and views of which, are a scene of wonders, and an inexhaustible source of joy.

Divine *holiness* they contemplate with supreme delight. God is glorious in holiness. This perfection of the Godhead has frequently been celebrated in the loftiest strains of devotion,

devotion, by saints on earth †. And if they who dwell in houses of clay, whose views, at the best, are so feeble and partial, have been so affected by meditating on it; what thoughts must they have who see it in its glory? With adoring hearts and ravished eyes; with inflamed devotion and notes divinely sweet, they join the heavenly choirs in that seraphic hymn; **HOLY! HOLY! HOLY!**
IS THE LORD OF HOSTS! HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE FULL OF HIS GLORY! How inconceivable the pleasure! how divine the joy! And may I not venture to add, the views of this glorious holiness must have a transforming efficacy on the happy spirits; so as to produce in them a perpetually advancing conformity to God in holiness and glory?

If the face of *Moses* shone with peculiar brightness, after he had been admitted to familiar converse with Jehovah on the mount; how much greater must that effulgence and glory be, which God communicates to the saints in light, who constantly behold him without any interposing veil*?—And as the transcendent amiableness of the divine Being,

† Exod. xv. 11. 1 Sam. ii. 2. Psal. xxx. 4. and xcvi.
12. * Exod. xxxiv. 30. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

greatly

greatly consists in his immaculate holiness, (for holiness is nothing else but *intellectual beauty*) and as he presents himself to his saints, as the infinite and original beauty; their holy souls must rest in him as their proper object of love and delight, and be eternally enamoured with it. Nor can they cease to admire the equity of that command, which requires the most perfect love to God, on account of his own infinite amiableness and all-surpassing excellencies.

Further: Being favoured with a more perfect *knowledge* of God, and more intimate communion with him; their *love* to him is proportionably heightened. That grace which reigned in their whole salvation, being beheld by them in a fuller, stronger light; inflames them with the most ardent love to its adorable Author, and to Jesus by whom it reigned. All the amiable and infinite perfections of Deity, shining forth upon them in the light of glory, their holy bosoms cannot but glow with the utmost fervour. They cannot but make returns of love, and in such a manner, as are suited to their happy and exalted state. — This supreme degree of love to God, causes them to contemplate his divine perfections and astonishing operations, with ever-new delight; and assimilates them more and more

more to the blessed God. From all which must arise, a joy inconceivable by mortals; a joy which, in the sacred page, is called, *the joy of their Lord.*

Absolutely free from that pride and selfishness, which tarnish our best services while here; and infinitely remote from all those imperfections which attended them in a militant state; songs of sincerest gratitude and hymns of holy wonder; the profoundest acknowledgments of their multiplied obligations to rich, sovereign, reigning grace; and the loftiest strains of thanksgiving to God and the Lamb, are their uninterrupted and sweet employ. Ever free to declare, that the cause, the *sole* cause of their enjoying the beatific vision, and being seated on thrones of glory; is that grace which, as a mighty, magnificent, and bountiful sovereign, reigned through the person and work of Immanuel. Hence it is that grace, as it appears, and shines, and triumphs, in the obedience and blood of Jesus—in rescuing them out of the hands of satan—in preserving them in the midst of dangers—in supporting them in the severest trials—in bringing them safe to glory, and crowning them with unutterable bliss—is the grand and unvaried

burden

burden of their songs. To the GOD OF ALL GRACE, the *triune* God, they address all possible praise with divine delight.

Peculiarly great and glorious is that sublime blessedness, which is enjoyed by the *separate spirits* of the saints in heaven. Notwithstanding, it comes far short of that happiness which shall be enjoyed by them in their *whole persons*, and which belongs to the consummation of that celestial state. The oracles of God frequently intimate, that the bliss of the saints will not be absolutely complete, till the general judgment is past and the end of the world is come*. We may, therefore, take notice of some things, which will enhance their blessedness at that time.

Their bodies being *raised in glory*, and reunited to their immortal spirits, will not only be a demonstration of divine power and a display of divine goodness, very wonderful in their eyes; but also an *addition* to their blessedness. For, so long as any of the children of God continue in this perplexing, miserable world; and so long as the bodies of

* Col. iii. 4. 2 Tim. i. 12. and iv. 8. 1 Pet. v. 4.

the saints departed are confined in the prison of the grave; the happy spirits in glory cannot be ignorant, that the power which sin obtained over man, is not yet entirely abolished; and, consequently, something must be wanting to the consummation of their joy. But, by the resurrection, death itself, which is the last enemy, *shall be destroyed*; never more to have the least power, but over the enemies of God and his people.

That the *dead* shall be raised, is a fundamental article of the christian creed. That the *same* bodies shall be raised, which fell by death, the justice of God and the comfort of believers seem to require; is certain from the scriptures, and is implied in the word *resurrection*. But though they will be the same, as to their *substance*; so far, at least, as shall be sufficient to support the identity of them; yet the alteration will be so great, as to their *qualities*, that we are not able to form suitable ideas concerning them.—That surprising change which shall pass upon them, is absolutely necessary to fit them for that exalted state, into which they shall be introduced, when reanimated by their immortal spirits. Hence those words, *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*. The present constitution

stitution of our bodies, renders them incapable of bearing the splendor of the heavenly world; and, consequently, of partaking in the joys of that state. The glory of it would be insupportably bright; too dazzling for them to sustain. Like herbs and flowers of the most delicate kind, exposed to the scorching glare of the meridian sun, they would faint under it. But, when that which was *sown in corruption*, shall be *raised in incorruption*; when that which was *sown in dishonour and weakness*, shall be *raised in glory and power*; when this *corruptible shall put on incorruption*; and this *mortal shall put on immortality*—in a word, when that which was *sown a natural body*, shall be *raised a spiritual body*; it will then be capable of partaking in the business and bliss of the righteous. When the bodies of believers shall be *raised by almighty power and fashioned by infinite skill*, like to the glorious body of Christ*; they will then be fit companions for their souls to all eternity. *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun*, both in body and soul, *in the kingdom of their Father* †.—Then shall the body, which partook in the sorrows and sufferings

* Philip. iii. 21.

† Matt. xiii. 43.

of this present world; which suffered various hardships and acts of violence, from the enemies of the cross of Christ; and which assisted the intellectual powers in performing religious duties, be a partaker of the joys of that triumphant state. Yes, the earthly tabernacle, being the purchase of redeeming blood, and the temple of the Holy Ghost, even when surrounded with imperfections; shall then be bright as the sun, vigorous with celestial youth, and undecaying as the power that shall for ever support it. We may therefore conclude, that the bodies of the saints being raised from the dust of death, will not a little contribute to augment their bliss.—But who can form adequate ideas of the nature and excellencies of a *spiritual body*? Who can declare the power and the grace, that shall be exercised and manifested towards the children of men, in raising their sleeping dust; in new-moulding their bodies for an eternal world, after so dignified an exemplar as the glorious body of Christ? Here we must leave them, till we behold the glorified body of the exalted Redeemer, or experience the happy transformation. For the beloved disciple himself declares; *It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when*

he

he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is †. To which I may add, in allusion to the words of the psalmist; we shall certainly be *satisfied* with the amazing alteration, *when we awake* from the sleep of death, in the *likeness* of the adorable Jesus †.

Another thing which will contribute to the blessedness of the saints at that day, will be their *public acquittal*, by Jesus their judge, when standing before his tribunal.—*Bebold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him!* Infinitely grand and awfully amiable He now appears. Innumerable angels attend his approach and pour around his chariot. The brightness of ten thousand suns is lost, in the blaze of his glory and the lustre of his countenance. And lo! a great white throne is erected*; clear as the light and fiery as the flame. The Judge, inflexibly just and immensely glorious, ascends the tribunal; and before his presence, *the heavens and the earth flee away*. The innumerable millions of rational creatures that people the universe, are now assembled. The books are opened. Myriads of adoring seraphs, and countless multitudes of anxious spectators,

† 1 John iii. 2.

† Psal. xvii. 15.

* Rev. xx. 11.

wait the grand result. And, while the wicked, with trembling hands and throbbing hearts ; with horror in their aspect and damnation in view, would be glad to lose their being ; the righteous are bold and intrepid. For the Judge is their righteousness, their friend and their saviour. The righteousness in which they appear, was performed by Him. The plea which they make, He cannot reject. For it is the blood which He shed to atone for their sins, and the promise He made to comfort their souls, under the expectation of this important event. They there stand, not to have any fresh indictment brought against them ; not to have any thing laid to their charge, by satan, or the law, or justice ; but to be openly and honourably acquitted, in the presence of angels and the whole assembled world. The sentence of justification, long before pronounced in the court of heaven, and in the court of conscience at the time of their conversion ; is now recognised in the most public and solemn manner. The works of faith and labours of love performed by them, in the time of their pilgrimage here below, towards their needy fellow-christians ; are now produced by the righteous, omniscient Judge, as *fruits* and

F f evidences

evidences of their union with him, faith in him, and love to him *. The *nature* and *qualities* of their

* Matt. xxv. 34—40. It is very observable, how different the conduct of the saints will be, at that awful and glorious time, from that of hypocrites, pharisees, and nominal professors, as represented by our Lord in *Matt. vii. 22.* Here we find *Jesus*, the appointed judge, taking notice of the works of his people, when *they* make no mention of them. Not only so, but when he is pleased to mention them with the highest approbation, they seem to have forgotten that they ever performed them. A plain proof they did not expect salvation by them, nor ever thought of any such thing. No ; Christ, they knew, was their righteousness, and that was sufficient. And the works they performed were designed to glorify him, and to express their gratitude to God for his benefits. But, so conscious were they of the imperfections cleaving to them, that they were ashamed to mention them.—Whereas, when our Lord represents the ground and reasons of the hope of the self-righteous and hypocrites, he tells us that they will say, with great importunity ; *Lord ! Lord ! have we not prophesied in thy name ? and in thy name have cast out devils ? and in thy name done many wonderful works ?* But He will answer, *I never knew you : Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* These persons plead their own works, their religious duties, and great usefulness, as a sufficient reason why they should be admitted into the kingdom of glory. Not that they pretend to have done these things by their own *strength*, or natural abilities. No ; they acknowledge they were done in *the name of Christ* ; by his authority and his assistance. For which reason, we may suppose, they would be the more confident of acceptance with him.

Hence,

their works ; the principle and view, from and with which they were done, together with the character of the persons who were benefited

Hence, *we have done this*, and *we have done the other*, is their cry and their plea. They thought of coming to heaven by their *own doings*. They did them for that end, and were loth to be disappointed. But what is the issue ? Why, truly, these mighty workers and very useful persons, are *branded* as the workers of iniquity ; not *acknowledged* as the people of God. They are thrust down into hell, with all their fine recommendations and imaginary goodness ; notwithstanding all their pleas and promising hopes founded upon them.—While the *poor in spirit*, they who are sensible of their own deficiencies, sinfulness and unworthiness ; who live by a righteousness imputed, making that the only ground of their hope of eternal life ; and who, from love to the truth, and to Christ as revealed by it, perform good works with a view to the glory of God, not in the least expecting admission into the eternal kingdom for the sake of their pious performances—these, who say not a word about any thing which they have done, are accepted by the Judge of all, into everlasting honour and joy.—Let the *legalist* be cautioned by this, not to trust in his own duties, though of the most splendid kind. And let all who *love the truth* be encouraged, to abound in every instance of duty and gratitude to God ; and especially in that of communicating to the necessities, of the *poor brethren* and indigent members of Christ. For the Judge will say to them on his right-hand ; *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*, Matt. xxv. 40. What condescension is here ! Christ is not ashamed to own the very meanest of his people, under the

benefited by them ; will afford sufficient evidence, to whom the performers of them belong. These being remembered by Christ, though forgotten by the saints, he will avow them for his own ; he will number them among his jewels ; he will confess them before his Father and all the holy angels.— Then shall their characters, which in the time of their tabernacling here below, were aspersed with every foul reproach, which their enemies could invent or cast upon them, be fully vindicated to their everlasting honour,

character of *brethren*.—I am greatly afraid there are many professors, whose situation in life is a little more elevated than that of their neighbours, who are almost above looking at the *poor brethren* of Christ ; and would be extremely offended, if one of those indigent disciples were to address them under the character of a *brother*. But who art thou, vain mortal ! thou worm of the earth ! that art only exalted on a little higher dunghill than some of thy fellow-worms ; that thou shouldst be ashamed of them, whom Jesus the Lord of glory and Judge of the world, will acknowledge as *his brethren* ? What ! shall a little shining dust, or worldly honour, so elate thy ignoble mind and swell thy contracted heart, that the poor and the mean, among the members of Jesus, shall have no place in thy affections ? Beware lest, after all thy profession, thou shouldst go down to hell with a lie in thy right-hand ; and all thy expectations of eternal happiness prove no better, than “ the baseless fabric of a vision ! ”

enemies

and to the eternal confusion of all their adversaries. For, with a smile of divine complacence, the Judge will say ; *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Reviving words ! They had long desired and languished to be near the Lord, and now they are invited to *come* ; to be near him and with him for ever. Now the painful anxieties and fears which they once had, are entirely and eternally removed ; for they are pronounced *blessed*, blessed of the Father, by a voice which the whole assembled world shall hear. They were all poor in spirit, the generality of them poor in temporals ; how agreeably, then, must they be surprised to hear, that they are called to possess a *kingdom* ; called to *inherit* it, as princes of the blood royal, who are born for thrones and crowns ? Lost, they will be, in pleasing astonishment to find, that before they had a being, or the foundations of the world were laid, the eternal God had *prepared* this kingdom for them ; and every reflection upon the way in which they came to possess it, must heighten their amazement and joy. Then shall they be admitted, in their whole persons, into the *fulness* of bliss ; into a *nearer* and *more perfect*

fruition of the infinite God, than they ever before enjoyed.

Once more: Their blessedness thus heightened, shall be *eternal*. It is eternity stamped upon their enjoyments, that gives them their infinite worth. For could they who are so high in bliss, be apprehensive of an end of their happiness, however remote; “that ghastly thought would drink up all their joy.” But their inheritance is unalienable, their crown unfading, and their kingdom everlasting. Jehovah himself is *their light*, and the Most High *their glory*. Yes, the infinite God is their portion and *exceeding great reward**. Their felicity, therefore, is permanent, as the divine perfections they adore and enjoy; and made certain to their own penetrating and comprehensive minds, beyond the possibility of a doubt. This makes their state supremely glorious; this constitutes it heaven indeed.—And what if the limits of their capacities should be for ever enlarging, and for ever receiving larger measures of glory? For the Godhead is an infinite ocean of life and blessedness, and finite vessels may be for ever expanding and for ever

* Isa. lx. 19. Gen. xv. 1.

filling,

filling, in the sea of All-sufficiency. What an amazing state of ever-growing pleasure! What an eternal advance of heaven! What an astonishing scale of bliss! Jehovah shall open his endless stores of blessings, as yet unknown to angels, and feast his saints with joys that are ever-new, and near akin to those prepared for his own incarnate Son *. Nothing equal to this can be conceived by mortals; nothing superior can be enjoyed by mere creatures. Yet this—hear it, O ye nations! listen, ye isles from afar! and let all the millions of the blessed dwell upon the stupendous truth!—this is the *end* of the victorious reign of grace. Grace reigned in the eternal counsels, in contriving the *way* to this glorious end. Grace reigned in providing the *means*, which were necessary to its accomplishment. Grace reigned in *every particular* requisite to the complete execution of the noble, the astonishing design, from first to last. Surely, then, reigning grace should have the whole, the unrivalled glory of all the blessings enjoyed, by believers on earth, or saints in light. Yes, and it shall have the glory, in all the churches of Christ

* Dr. WATTS's *Serm.* vol. i. p. 225, 226. Edit. 6th.

below, and in all the triumphant hosts above. And when the last stone of the magnificent building, the spiritual temple, shall be laid; it will be *with shoutings, GRACE! GRACE UNTO IT* *!

In these particulars the blessedness of the saints, in their entire persons, after the resurrection and the general judgment, will exceed that of their separate spirits. And in how many other respects the proceedings of that day will add to their happiness, I neither affirm, nor presume to enquire. It is sufficient for us to know, while in this dark and imperfect state, that we are heirs of that blessedness; that it is inconceivably great; and rest contented with what is revealed concerning it, without indulging a curious and wanton imagination, in searching after those particulars respecting it, of which the Spirit of wisdom has given us no intimations, or such as are very obscure: for such enquiries are sure to be attended with vanity, rather than edification.

Nor will the angelic hosts be unaffected spectators, when this grandest of all divine works, REDEMPTION, shall be finally com-

* Zech. iv. 7.

pleted.

pleted. For as they had frequently been charged with offices and messages of great importance to the church and its particular members, while in this lower world; so they had often beheld with astonishment, the incarnation of their Sovereign, his feeble appearance in the manger, his life of poverty, reproaches and sufferings. They saw his agony in the garden, and heard his cries and complaints. They saw him extended on the cross, and beheld him laid in the grave. They were witnesses of his victorious resurrection, and attended his triumphant ascension into the realms of glory. They beheld and often reflected upon these things with amazement. They had long and diligently looked into these works of divine contrivance, these mysteries of infinite love*; wondering what they should mean, and what would be the grand result. They had long desired the evolution of the mysterious plan, and now, now they have it.

“ Now they are struck with deep amaze,
“ Each with his wing conceals his face;
“ Now clap their sounding plumes and cry
“ *The glories of the DEITY.*”

* 1 Pet. i. 12.

If those first-born sons of light and love, could not forbear *shouting for joy*, when they beheld the material world rise into existence and saw its finished form*; how much greater reason will they have to rejoice, when they behold all the redeemed world brought safe to glory and confirmed in bliss? Those morning stars, those children of ardour and sons of God, must exult with joy, when they view the spotless perfection and ravishing excellencies of the bride, the wife of the Lamb†. Nor can any thing short of perfect transport seize their breasts, when they reflect, that all her immaculate innocence and matchless beauty arose from reigning grace, through the person and work of their incarnate Sovereign; her own original being base and miserable.

And now, reader, what are your thoughts of this blessedness? Very probably you are one of those, who hope to go to heaven when they die. If so, what is your hope? Is it a mere *wish*, or a well-grounded *expectation*? Remember, that the word of God requires you, as a christian professor, to be *ready to*

* Job xxxviii. 7. † Eph. v. 27. Rev. xxi. 9.

give an answer to every man that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you*. Have you, then, ever seriously enquired, why you hope to be happy, when so many millions will be eternally miserable; when it is certain from the scripture, that there are, comparatively, very few that find the way to life?— You have, peradventure, never thought much about these interesting subjects. But why, then, do you call yourself a *christian*? Why *hope* to go to heaven? For if this be your condition, your careless soul is *in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity*. You are—may God enlighten your mind to see it! may reigning grace deliver you from it!—you are, at present, a child of wrath and an heir of destruction.

Again: Why hope for heaven? when you have no delight in God; no pleasure in his ways; no love to his people; in a word, possessed of no holiness; and without holiness, real, intellectual happiness is impossible. Heaven, were you there, would be no heaven to you; nor, as an unregenerate sinner, can you desire it for the sake of its enjoyments: For they are contrary to the bias of

* 1 Pet. iii. 15.

your nature and the prevailing inclination of your will. You have no *love* for heaven, but are *afraid* of hell. The inhabitants of the celestial world would be no companions for you. Their business would be a toil, and their language unknown; their sweetest hosannahs would afford you no pleasure, and the symphony of their golden harps would be discord in your ears. Yea, the fruition of God, their highest joy, would be your greatest uneasiness, were you to be admitted into those mansions of purity in a carnal, unregenerate state. For happiness consists in the enjoyment of an object, that is suitable and satisfying to our desires. A holy God, therefore, cannot be our happiness, without partaking of his holiness. Remember, sinner, that if you leave the world in such a situation, as you are not fit for heaven, so you cannot enter those abodes of blissful purity, or taste their refined pleasures; but your state will be eternally fixed, where there is *weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.*

Is my reader a *serious* person, a *strict* professor? Be it so; yet it behoves you to consider, what is the foundation of your hope. For *there is a way that seemeth right unto a man;*

man; but the end thereof are the ways of death*. A man may be zealous for God, and, in many respects, exemplary in his conversation; and yet, after all, perish for ever†. What, then, is the reason of your hope? Is it that grace which reigns through the person and work of Jesus? Can you say with the primitive christians, *We believe that through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved?* Are you come to a point about that most interesting and solemn affair, the salvation of your immortal soul? Is your hope of glory lively and bright, or languid and obscure? Is it such as is attended with rejoicing, as purifies the heart and conduct†? Has it Christ and his finished work, together with the promise of Him that cannot lie, for its everlasting support?—O, professor! seek for satisfaction and certainty: they are to be had, in the knowledge of Christ and belief of the truth. If you love your soul, rest not in a mere peradventure, about an affair of infinite consequence. You are building for eternity; be cautious, therefore, with what materials you build, and upon what foundation. A mistake in the

* Prov. xvi. 25. † Rom. ix. 31, 32. and x. 2, 3.

‡ Rom. v. 2. 1 Pet. i. 3, 5. 1 John iii. 3.

ground

ground of your trust, will ruin your soul, and can never be remedied. Read your Bible, meditate and pray; and may the Spirit of wisdom direct you in the momentous concern!

Again: Are you a *child* of God and an *heir* of the kingdom? endeavour, by a conscientious attendance on all the public means of grace, and by maintaining communion with your heavenly Father in every private duty, to make a swift progress in vital religion, in real holiness; remembering, that holiness is the right temperature, the beauty and glory of your immortal mind. Seek after it, therefore, as a divine privilege, as an heavenly blessing.—Watch and pray against the insurrections of indwelling sin, the solicitations of worldly pleasure, and the assaults of satan's temptations. Watch, especially, against *spiritual pride* and *carnal security*. As to the former; rejoice not in your knowledge or gifts, or inherent excellencies; no, nor yet in your christian experiences. Be thankful for them, but put them not in the place of the Saviour, or the word of his grace; so as to make them the ground of your present trust, or the source of your future comfort. For so to do, is, not to rely on the promise of God, and live by faith

faith in Jesus; but to admire your own accomplishments, by which you differ from other men, and to live upon your own frames. The consequence of which most commonly is, either *pharisaical* pride, imagining ourselves to be better than others; or *desponding* fears, as if, when our frames are flat and our spirits languid, there were no salvation for us. The peace and comfort of such professors, must be fluctuating and uncertain to the last degree.—But, as a guilty, perishing sinner; as having no recommendation, nor any encouragement, to believe in Jesus or look for salvation by him, but what is contained in the word of grace; look to him, live by him. And the more you see of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, the more will you see of your own vileness. The more you grow in real holiness, the more sensible you will be of the power of your own corruptions, and the imperfections attending all your duties. You will be more and more convinced, that if the gospel did not warrant your dependance on Christ, under the character of a *sinner*; you could have no hope, even after ever so long and zealous a profession of religion. You should live under a continual remembrance, that, in yourself,

yourself, you are still an unworthy, a guilty, a damnable creature; but accepted in Christ, and freed from every curse. That will keep you *truly humble*, and provoke to self-abhorrence; this will make you *really happy*, and excite to praise and duty.

Watch no less against *carnal security* and *spiritual sloth*. Remember, you have many enemies. *Be sober*, therefore, *be vigilant*. Time is short and absolutely uncertain. Husband well your precious moments. Lay them out for God. Be careful that the fruits of gratitude to your infinite Benefactor, adorn your whole behaviour. Make the holiness and usefulness of the life of Jesus, your fair exemplar: copy after that brightest of patterns.—Remember, that the eyes of God, of angels, of accursed spirits, and of men, are all upon you. Both friends and enemies inspect your conduct and mark your steps. How necessary, then, is watchfulness and circumspection! Lest, falling into sin, your spiritual joys be impaired, your friends and allies be grieved, and your adversaries triumph.—Having received the earnest of your future inheritance; having had some joyful fore-tastes of that immense bliss, of which you, **O christian**, are an heir; make it your constant

stant business, as it is, your indispensable duty, to live above the world, whether your temporal circumstances be affluent or penurious, prosperous or adverse. Let your conversation be in heaven, as becomes a citizen of the new *Jerusalem*. It is your duty, and blessing to live in the prospect of the world to come, and as on the very confines of it. Converse much with the eternal Mind, in prayer, and praise, and devout meditation; so shall you contract a blessed intimacy with that all-glorious Being, whose favour is better than life, whose frown is worse than destruction. By such an intercourse with God, you will taste more exquisite delights, than all the pleasures of sin can boast; than all the riches of the world can bestow. Yes, believer, by such a converse with God, you shall find your mercies sanctified, and your afflictions alleviated; your holy dispositions invigorated, and your corrupt affections weakened.—Be it your constant endeavour, that whenever your fair, your glorious, your heavenly Bridegroom shall come, he may find you ready; having your loins girt, your lamp burning, and waiting for his glorious advent. So shall your soul be peaceful, your life useful, and your death triumphant.

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While

While we soar on the wings of faith and holy meditation, in order to explore the wonders of reigning grace; while we attempt to sound its depths and measure its heights, we are rapt, as it were, to the suburbs of heaven. We taste the joys divinely sweet, and savour the entertainments of angels. But, alas! how soon the pinions of divine contemplation flag! How soon are we interrupted by the workings of indwelling sin, or by the impertinences of a noisy, busy, transient world! Yet, for our comfort, we have to remember, that when a few more of our fleeting days are elapsed, we shall enter on a state unchangeable, to enjoy those infinite delights which are included in the *beatific vision*; in the *fruition* of the eternal JEHOVAH.

To conclude: From this imperfect and brief survey of *the reign of grace*; from this feeble attempt to illustrate its power and majesty, we may learn; That the free favour of God, manifested in our salvation, is a theme so copious and so sublime, that all which can be said, by the most evangelical and eloquent preachers; all that can be written, by the most accurate and descriptive pens;

pens; all that can be conceived, by the most excursive and sanctified imagination among the sons of men, must come infinitely short of a full display. Yes, after all that is imagined or can be sung, by angels or men, by seraphs or saints, in the church below or the choirs above; the charming subject will remain unexhausted to eternity. For the riches of Christ are unsearchable, and the grace of God is unbounded. Who, then?

“ Who shall fulfil the boundless song ? ”

“ What vain pretender dares ? ”

“ The theme surmounts an angel’s tongue,

“ And *Gabriel’s* harp despairs.”

WATTS.

F I N I S.

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